THE BIBLE OF BOXING

# The RING

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the RING

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WILDER: AMANDA WESTCOTT; JOSUHA: COURTESY OF MATCHROOM

# OPENING SHOT

Ryota Murata connects with a face-distorting right hand en route to stopping Emanuele Blandamura in eight rounds on April 15 in Yokohama. There is talk that the Japanese middleweight star could challenge Gennady Golovkin at the end of the year. (Photo by Naoki Fukuda)

## NO P4P LOVE FOR AJ?

What are the chances of Anthony Joshua taking Rigondeaux's spot at No. 10 on THE RING's pound-for-pound ratings? I struggle to make an argument for it not happening, but equally I've no doubt there are some in the Cult of Rigo out there who still think he should be No. 1.

*Mike Firth*
*Weymouth, U.K.*

*EDITOR'S RESPONSE: Should Joshua's success continue (especially with a victory over Deontay Wilder), his chances are probably somewhere between "very high" and "no-brainer."*

★

I'm keen to find out how THE RING decides its pound-for-pound ratings. Anthony Joshua has beaten three active Top 10 fighters in his division, including the third best fighter in his division – who was an unbeaten world champion – not to mention an all-time great, a shoo-in for the Hall of Fame, in Wladimir Klitschko, who was rated higher than Joshua before Joshua beat him and still rated in the top three afterward, prior to Wlad retiring. Joshua is stronger in every category than Terence Crawford (who is No. 2), so is it that Crawford's potential is seen as being that much greater than Joshua's, and if so how do you justify that? And I have huge respect for The Bible of Boxing, but having Errol Spence (No. 8) above Joshua in the ratings doesn't make sense to me.

*Robert Hannan*

*EDITOR'S RESPONSE: Saying that Joshua is "stronger in every category" and suggesting that Crawford is in the p4p list based purely on "potential" is highly questionable, but that aside, THE RING's ratings are decided by several boxing journalists who put their heads together each week. Joshua's name has been brought up many times as a possibility, but the fact is that heavyweights are viewed differently by some panel members because so much of their success is based on punching power. Joshua clearly has more than just brute strength, though, and his name will surely come up again.*

## GETTING THEIR DUE

I fully agree with Barney Ross as Fighter of the Year for 1933 (April 2018 issue). How about now designating Muhammad Ali as Fighter of the Year for 1966? Nat Fleischer was the greatest of all boxing experts, despite his sometimes eccentric judgments, but I never cared for his moralistic "Fighter of the Year" criteria. A boxer should be judged on what he does inside the ring and nothing else.

*Mark Taha*
*London*

*EDITOR'S RESPONSE: Former Editor-in-Chief Michael Rosenthal agreed with you wholeheartedly, and Ali was in fact recognized as the 1966 Fighter of the Year in our March 2017 issue.*

★

I'd like to comment on probably the longest debate in the history of boxing, the Marvelous Marvin Hagler vs. Sugar Ray Leonard fight. First, I should like to say I was and still am a big fan of both of them, maybe more on Hagler's side because he is from Massachusetts and I had the pleasure of meeting him in person several times. I think the fight could have gone either way, but because Hagler was the champ, he should have gotten the split decision. However, right from the beginning, Hagler made big mistakes. Leonard wanted the bigger ring, Hagler agreed. Leonard wanted the thumbless gloves, Hagler agreed. The biggest mistake was a 12-round fight instead of 15 rounds; at that time they could have had a 15-round fight. Hagler should have turned the fight into an all-out brawl, like a street fight – nothing dirty, but a rough and tough fight. Leonard wouldn't have liked that. He also let Leonard steal several rounds with flurries at the end. If anyone but me remembers, at the end of 12 rounds, Leonard was all done. Hagler was dancing around the ring waiting for the decision and said himself that he had plenty of energy left.

*Angelo C. Colella*
*Lynn, Mass.*

## TWEET OF THE MONTH

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**Miguel Nahuat**
**@mnahuat909**
**Two is better than one**

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*Pictured left to right: Damon Allen Jr., Jessie Vargas, Fernando Vargas*

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Stefan Friedman

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**
Douglass Fischer

**MANAGING EDITOR**
Brian Harty

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR**
Lamar Clark

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**
Tom Gray

**CONTROLLER**
Deborah L. Harrison

**CIRCULATION DIRECTOR**
Kenneth J. Gudaitis

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800-846-6438
thering@emailcustomerservice.com

**SEND EDITORIAL COMMENTS TO:**
comeoutwriting@sepublications.com
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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

BY DOUGLASS FISCHER

## TIME TO MOVE ON

**On April 18, the Nevada Athletic** Commission (NAC) suspended Canelo Alvarez for six months due to his testing positive for clenbuterol, thus ending the month-and-a-half-long melodrama that had plagued the Mexican star's ill-fated May 5 rematch with Gennady Golovkin.

From March 5, when it was announced that Alvarez had failed two tests for the banned substance while in Mexico, to the NAC's disciplinary hearing on the issue, the sparse details of his case and the jeopardized pay-per-view event dominated boxing news and social media debates.

The suspension, which was part of an adjudication agreement between Team Canelo and NAC executive director Bob Bennett (who seemed to accept Alvarez's claim that he ingested the PED through tainted meat), took place too late in the magazine's production cycle to have a feature story in this issue, but the entire Canelo-clenbuterol-Golovkin saga will be put into its proper perspective in next month's edition of THE RING.

In the meantime, here's what boxing fans will have to live with: Canelo-GGG 2 is off for now. By the time this magazine sees print, Golovkin will have faced Vanes Martirosyan on May 5 at StubHub Center in Carson, California. Alvarez, whose suspension is retroactive to his first positive test from a February 17 sample, will be able to compete again in August, which means the superfight with GGG could take place in September (obviously on the Saturday of Mexican Independence Day weekend, a customary PPV date).

Until that rematch is officially scheduled or another fight involving one of the two middleweight stars is announced, let's all shelve our neurotic Canelo-Golovkin obsession. I think we've devoted enough news time and wasted enough social media outrage on these two to last through the summer.

The mania to date hasn't been fair at all to the rest of the boxing world.

Deontay Wilder and Luis Ortiz deserved to bask in the euphoria of their dramatic heavyweight battle on March 3 for at least a week, but news of Canelo's positive tests cut the Bronze Bomber's victory lap to two days.

Golovkin's incendiary interviews during a March 20 media day at his training camp, in which he called both Alvarez and Oscar De La Hoya "dirty cheats," and the NAC's announcement of their "temporary suspension" three days later cut into the pre-fight hype to the March 31 heavyweight title unification showdown between Anthony Joshua and Joseph Parker (at least it did here in the U.S.).

The April 3 press conference that Golden Boy Promotions and Team Canelo held in Los Angeles to announce Alvarez's official withdrawal from the Golovkin rematch stole the headlines from the April 7 junior middleweight title unification between Erislandy Lara and Jarrett Hurd.

GGG promoter Tom Loeffler's April 13 press conference in L.A. to announce that he had no announcement on what Golovkin would do next, and the NAC's official suspension hearing five days later, significantly cut into the build-up to the Adrien Broner-Jessie Vargas-headlined show on April 21.

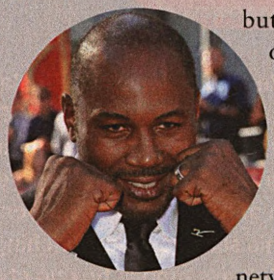
These were all significant matchups that were overlooked to a degree because of our collective fixation on the Canelo-GGG spectacle, and with the exception of Joshua-Parker, those were amazing fights – boxing at its best!

Let's not do that with the quality matchups on deck in May, June and July. Jorge Linares vs. Vasyl Lomachenko, Sadam Ali vs. Liam Smith, Gary Russell Jr. vs. Joseph Diaz Jr., Adonis Stevenson vs. Badou Jack, Naoya Inoue-Jamie McDonnell, Leo Santa Cruz vs. Abner Mares II, Manny Pacquiao vs. Lucas Matthysse and the WBSS finals (whenever they're scheduled) are all deserving of our full attention.

We can uncork all of our passion, loathing and outrage if and when the Canelo-Golovkin rematch (which is now a full-fledged grudge match) is announced in August. That's when it will be appropriate.

Lennox Lewis is the last heavyweight to be recognized as the undisputed champion.

# LAST MAN STANDING



**My entire goal as a** professional fighter was to test myself against the best and to prove, as I used to say, "that in a room full of men, I would be the last man standing." My goal was to be undisputed heavyweight champion of the world, and it was not an easy one. It was a road filled with adversity, politics and shady characters, and even the smallest mistake could derail everything.

Sometimes I felt like I was fighting many battles aside from in the ring with my opponents. I was considered an outsider by some, an opportunist by others, not British enough or not Canadian enough when all I wanted to do was to prove that I could sit on top of the mountain.

Before I fought Evander Holyfield in 1999 for the honor of being called the undisputed heavyweight champion, I had heard that he was saying he was the best. My question was, "How can he be the best if he hasn't fought me?" When the fight was made, I knew this was going to be a fight for my legacy. This was what I had dreamed of as a teenager in Kitchener. To be recognized as the best of the best.

I have always called Holyfield my toughest competitor. It took two fights with him before I would reach my goal of becoming the undisputed heavyweight champion. Some said, "Lennox, you could have knocked him out in the first fight," but Holyfield is a warrior through and through and I wasn't going to take too many chances with him. Especially when I was so close to accomplishing everything I had ever dreamed of doing in the ring.

I won both fights with Holyfield, but they called the first one a draw. Politricks. The second fight was more competitive than the first, but still I felt I won that one convincingly too. I had reached the top and proved that among the champions, I was the best of the best. Undisputed.

Recently, there were network talks that there hasn't been an undisputed heavyweight champion since Mike Tyson in 1989. This caught me off guard because since 1989, there have been FOUR fighters to hold the title. Buster Douglas, Holyfield, Riddick Bowe and myself. Speaking for myself, not only as a former undisputed champion but as the last man to hold that title, I honestly felt disrespected.

I have always paid respect to the champions before me, not only for my idol, Muhammad Ali, but all of the great champions of the past, including Joe Frazier, George Foreman and Larry Holmes, who all paved the way for me. It takes a certain type of mind-set to enter the ring – definitely different from sitting behind a desk talking about the fighters and their accomplishments.

In my era, there were only three major sanctioning bodies: the WBC, WBA and IBF. At that time, the WBO belt carried no weight in the heavyweight division. In fact, many of their champions would drop the WBO belt in order to fight for one of the major sanctioning organization titles. The fact that it is now a recognized championship belt doesn't take away from my accomplishments or those of Douglas, Holyfield or Bowe.

As we approach the crowning of the next undisputed heavyweight champion, the top prospects on track to fight for that title appear to be Anthony Joshua and Deontay Wilder. Both champions, and both still with a lot to learn. Wilder is a wild force of nature. He throws punches from left field, but if they hit you anywhere around the head, they're going to concuss you. He's very unpredictable, and that's a dangerous fighter to come up against. Wilder's not the normal fighter who throws a straight jab and a straight right, but what he is doing has worked for him so far.

Anthony Joshua is the man to beat right now. He's unified all of the other belts but needs to add the the crown jewel to his collection, which is Deontay's WBC belt. After seeing his last fight against Joseph Parker, Joshua's first fight that went the distance, I was impressed with his ability to use his jab to keep proper distance and control the fight. He wasn't as aggressive as I think he could have been, but still, he did what was needed to win. Joshua still has a lot to learn and he needs more experience. The good thing is he learns fast. He just needs a great teacher.

The boogeyman in the division is still Tyson Fury. He's been very inactive, but if he gets his act together, then he's still a serious force to be reckoned with. He's the man who beat the man, and that's important.

Heavyweights just seem to lack the proper teaching. I don't see anyone who brings the entire arsenal these days. They are strong in some areas and weak in others. You want to be a fighter who brings an entire offensive and defensive skill set to the table. I boxed in many different ways. Emanuel Steward would say, "This guy's getting knocked out with the uppercut!" or "This guy's getting knocked out with the hook!" If the right hand wasn't there, then I had other punches in my arsenal. I just don't see the same variety from today's heavyweights. The trainers are now more important than ever as the talent pool is more balanced. They will be the x-factor in crowning the next undisputed heavyweight champion.

*— Lennox Lewis, former undisputed heavyweight champion of the world.*

# ROUND 1

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH ★ NEW FACES ★ AND MORE!

## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

**JARRETT HURD** did the near-impossible – twice – against Erislandy Lara on April 7 at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York. The defending IBF junior middleweight titleholder legitimately outpointed the ring-savvy southpaw (albeit by narrow split decision) and forced the long-reigning WBA beltholder to engage in an ENTERTAINING scrap. Hurd brought a fraction of the amateur experience that Lara possesses to their unification showdown but his size, volume-punching, relentless pressure and underrated craft overcame the Cuban's mobile boxing style and sharpshooting in dramatic fashion – scoring a final-round knockdown to secure his victory. If he can make for a Fight of the Year candidate vs. Lara, think about what Hurd vs. Jermell Charlo will look like.

ERIK VERDUZCO

## ADVANCED DEGREES

Degrees of separation between fighters of the past and their more contemporary counterparts. To honor this month's guest editor, Lennox Lewis, regular contributor Gregg Morgan connected Lewis with the first British-born world heavyweight champion, Bob Fitzsimmons, in eight steps. The start of Fitzsimmons' reign and Lewis' first world-title victory are separated by 96 years:

**Bob Fitzsimmons**
fought

**Jack Johnson**
who fought

**Brad Simmons**
who fought

**Ham Pounder**
who fought

**Archie Moore**
who fought

**Muhammad Ali**
who fought

**Larry Holmes**
who fought

**Evander Holyfield**
who fought

**Lennox Lewis**

NEW FACES

# TIM TSZYU

BY ANSON WAINWRIGHT

**When your father is former** undisputed junior welterweight champion and Hall of Famer Kostya Tszyu and you pick boxing as your profession, you instantly put a target on your back. Tim Tszyu is similar in that regard to Chris Eubank Jr., Conor Benn and Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., who all decided to follow in their famous fathers' footsteps.

"I grew up living the boxing life," Tszyu told THE RING. "So I have always been aware of the attention and fame that came with my dad's career. Me having the name Tszyu automatically places you in the spotlight; it has opened many doors and opportunities.

"I also know it's a long road in professional boxing, and I can only focus on my own performance and results."

It's too early to tell if those results will lead to anything resembling his father's outstanding achievements in the 1990s and early 2000s. As with the aforementioned sons, some will question whether that kind of success is even possible without the early life struggles their parents overcame.

Tszyu grew up in affluent surroundings afforded by his father's successes inside the ring. Unlike Kostya, who was forged in the foothills of the Ural mountains in Russia, Tim Tszyu was born in Sydney, Australia, after his father immigrated there and turned professional in 1992.

"Growing up in an Aussie lifestyle has its advantages," he said. "I have been blessed to live a fairly normal life even with dad's success and fame. He was always big on keeping our feet firmly on the ground. Remaining humble and prepared to do the hard yards are what it's all about.

"Success brings rewards, no doubt, but in this sport nothing is a given. You must work and work and keep on working to climb the ladder of success. And to keep on track you need a good family unit and great team around you to keep it all real. I am lucky to have both."

The 23-year-old junior middleweight was studying business management, but the academic pursuits are on hold at the moment because of his boxing career.

Obviously it would have been easy for Tszyu to select a far easier path in life. His younger brother Nikita also boxed but has now stepped away from the sport. However, that was never something that seriously crossed Tim's mind.

"I guess there was always a part of me that wanted to be like my dad," he said. "For a while I had other plans, but ultimately I think it's in my DNA. I just knew that this was for me.

"The challenge to climb to the top and see just how far I can go against the best is all the inspiration I needed to turn pro."

Prior to making that transition in December 2016, Tszyu compiled a 32-1 record as an amateur.

"I am happy to support Tim in whatever decision he chooses in his life," said his father. "Boxing is a very tough business; Tim knows this. I trust his judgment and know that he will work hard and succeed.

"Tim is at the beginning of the road. His journey will be tough. I am confident he has the skills and mental ability to succeed. I am very proud of Tim. He has already proven that he is a true professional."

Tszyu is considered one of the best prospects in Australia. He has excellent timing and the ability to judge distance very quickly, along with decent power in both hands. Although he's developing his own style, there are some similarities to how his father fought with regard to movement and controlling space with accurate, economical punching. He also has a strong local fan base, which his team is keen to grow by fighting throughout the country.

Fighting for a regional WBC belt in his seventh bout, Tszyu had to show resolve in getting off the canvas in Round 1 to best his gritty opponent over the distance. He also broke his thumb, which needed surgery, and was out of the ring for nearly six months before returning for a fifth-round stoppage of previously undefeated Ruben Webster in April. His record now stands at 8-0 (6 knockouts).

Kostya isn't actively involved in Tim's career. These days he lives in Moscow while his son is learning the sport thousands of miles away under the reliable stewardship of Igor Golubev – who is also Tim's uncle – and longtime friend and confidant Glen Jennings, who manages Tim.

"I am very happy with the team of people around Tim," said Kostya. "He is very well looked after; the results to date speak for this. I may not be physically present at every fight, but we are always in touch and I am always close."

It's Tszyu's young career in a nutshell: His father will be there – in one way or another – every time he steps into the ring. But Tim's lofty goals for his team are clearly his own.

"We aspire to one day be world champions and hold up the belts," he said. "For me personally, it is a road ahead full of challenges where I will have to dig deep to keep moving forward. I am excited to be challenged, to keep improving and to be the best I can be."

*Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright*

# JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

# CUT THE DAMN RING OFF

**We've seen it countless times.** Two fighters are in the ring. One of them is the aggressor and hits harder. But he can't get within punching range because the opponent keeps running. Invariably, one of the commentators says so-and-so "doesn't know how to cut the ring off."

But it's not that simple.

Standard operating procedure for cutting off the ring is as follows.

The ring is a square. Imagine your opponent moving around the perimeter. The first thing you have to say to yourself is, "I own the center of the ring. I own the middle."

Next, whichever side of the ring your opponent is on, draw an imaginary line from one corner of the ring to the opposite corner and stand on that line with one shoulder pointed toward each corner. That cuts the ring in half.

Let's assume both boxers fight out of an orthodox stance. If the opponent moves to his left, step forward with your left foot and slide to the right with your right foot. If the opponent moves to his right, you still step forward with your left foot, take another short step with your right, and then slide to the left with your left foot. What you're doing now is making the ring smaller and cutting down on your opponent's avenues of escape. If you do give him an avenue of escape, make him go to his right because it's hard for an orthodox fighter to punch

**Jermain Taylor (left) had a difficult time cutting the ring off on slick and mobile Cory Spinks during their middleweight title bout in 2007. Taylor was fortunate to earn a split decision that night in Memphis.**

effectively when he's moving to his right. And you repeat the process again and again until you're on top of your opponent.

"It's really not that complicated," says Pat Burns (who trained Jermain Taylor during the glory years). "It's all about footwork. If you and I got in the ring together, I could teach you how to do it in 15 minutes, yell at you for six weeks, and you'd be a master at cutting off the ring. It's a basic skill, but it has to be taught and then practiced again and again until each step becomes instinct."

Still, there's more to cutting off the ring than knowing how. It takes footwork, speed, and athleticism. And it's not just about closing the gap between a fighter and his opponent. The pursuing fighter has to get within range and, at the same time, accurately throw one or more punches.

Also, it's more difficult to cut the ring off against some fighters than others.

When Muhammad Ali was young, he was able to escape because he was incredibly fast on his feet. And if someone got inside, Ali knew how to tie him up. Hector Camacho could escape all night because he was fast on his feet and a southpaw to boot. And if a fighter is being pursued, he can evade being pinned in by getting off first with a jab and forcing his pursuer to reset while he starts moving again.

Further in that regard, veteran trainer Don Turner notes, "If Larry Holmes stuffed a jab in your face, all of a sudden you didn't want to cut the ring off on him so much."

★★★★

**Time goes by.**

Oscar De La Hoya and Bernard Hopkins did battle at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas for the unified middleweight championship of the world on September 18, 2004. More striking is the fact that the two men have coexisted as equity participants in Golden Boy Promotions since November of that year.

I was going through some old files recently and came across a handful of thoughts from Oscar and Bernard that I haven't used in articles before. Now seems like a good time to share them.

**Hopkins:** "If you don't know how to control your emotions, that's a signed death warrant in boxing."

**De La Hoya:** "Greed is good when you're a fighter."

**Hopkins:** "I don't like buffets. You pay to try to kill yourself."

**De La Hoya:** "Nothing can save you in that ring except yourself."

**Hopkins:** "James Toney makes out like he's this big gangsta. He makes out like he's from Detroit. The man came up in Ann Arbor. The only Big House they got there is the Michigan football stadium."

**De La Hoya:** "When you start losing to fighters you know you should beat, then it's time retire."

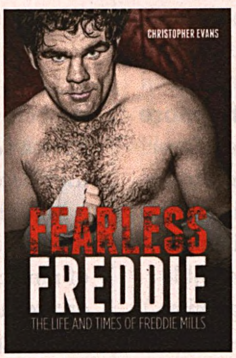
**Hopkins:** "It's not enough to fight like you're broke. That's easy. You have to train like you're broke."

**De La Hoya:** "I went through the fire and I'm still here."

★★★★

**It's not often that a member** of Parliament writes a book about boxing. But Christopher Evans, who represents Islwyn in South Wales, has done just that.

*Fearless Freddie* (Pitch Publishing) is a biography of Freddie Mills, the Englishman who compiled a 77-18-6 (55 KOs) record and reigned briefly as light heavyweight champion in the aftermath of World War II.




Mills was an aggressive action fighter. He won the crown in London by decision over Gus Lesnevich on July 26, 1948, and was knocked out by Joey Maxim in his first title defense. He was the epitome of a fighter who fought too long, suffering from memory loss, headaches, and blackouts throughout the later stages of his ring career.

After retiring from boxing, Mills parlayed his fame into a brief show business career. He also opened a Chinese restaurant and then a nightclub in which some of the hostesses doubled as prostitutes. He died on July 25, 1965, at age 46. The cause of death was a bullet that entered his head just above the right eye. Evans concurs with the authorities that Mills committed suicide.

At the time of Mills' death, he was in debt to an organized crime syndicate. There were also rumors, which Evans fails to explore, that Mills had a sexual relationship with a nightclub singer named Michael Holliday and that Mills was a serial killer known as "Jack the Stripper" who murdered eight women in London in 1964 and 1965.

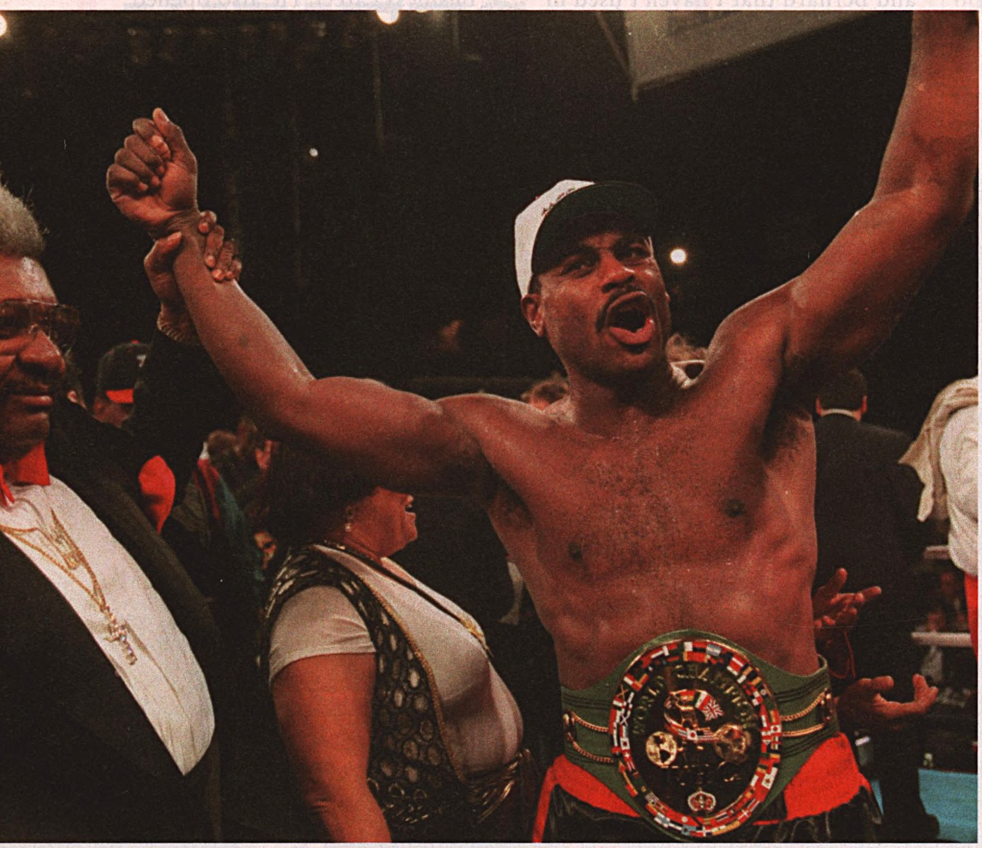
Evans sees Mills as a hero to working-class England. But like its subject, the book is flawed. I'm wary of biographies that recreate long-ago conversations and ascribe thoughts to subjects that can't possibly be verified. The most obvious example of this in Fearless Freddie is the description of Mills' suicide: "Closing his eyes, Freddie slowly counted backwards from ten before gently and deliberately pushing his thumb down on the trigger."

Let's get real. How could Evans possibly know that? RING

*Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book – There Will Always Be Boxing – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.*

# BEST I FACED

BY ANSON WAINWRIGHT



# OLIVER MCCALL

57-14 (37 KOs)

**Prior to scoring one of the more** shocking upsets of the 1990s, Oliver McCall was known in boxing circles for sparring countless rounds with a prime Mike Tyson. According to gym folklore, Tyson was never able to hurt, much less drop the granite-chinned gatekeeper.

However, McCall proved to be much more than a sparring partner when he traveled to England and upset Lennox Lewis for the WBC heavyweight title in 1994. The former fringe contender didn't hold the belt very long but went on to have a solid career that spanned four decades.

McCall was born in Chicago on April 21, 1965. He was the youngest of nine children, and his family lived on welfare in a tough part of town.

"I would say it was definitely tough for me and my family," McCall told THE RING. "It wasn't as tough for me, looking up at a lot of brothers and sisters. Those early days I was glad to have a big family."

His parents split up and eventually McCall, never far from trouble, was sent to live in foster care as a teen. During this time he first encountered boxing and fought briefly as an amateur, compiling a record of 31-2 (28 knockouts).

It was in his early years as a pro that McCall was employed by a rising Mike Tyson as a sparring partner.

As McCall built his own career in the ring, he lost to the likes of Buster Douglas (UD 10), Orlin Norris (SD 10) and Tony Tucker (SD 12). After the Tucker loss in June 1992, McCall put together five wins to become the WBC mandatory challenger.

In September 1994, McCall traveled to London with trainer Emanuel Steward in his corner to face Lewis. The underdog stopped the Brit in the second round.

After successfully outpointing Larry Holmes in his first defense, McCall returned to London and was outboxed by Frank Bruno. He came back with two wins to set up a rematch with Lewis in February 1997.

The fight came to a bizarre conclusion in the fifth round after "The Atomic Bull" had a mental breakdown, crying at times and not engaging Lewis until referee Mills Lane stepped in and ended the spectacle. McCall was fined $250,000 from his reported $3 million purse.

McCall was able to piece his career back together, and despite ongoing trouble with drugs and the law, he fought on until 2014. He was never again able to fight for the world title, however, and retired with a record of 57-14 (37 KOs). Incredibly, the only stoppage loss on his record came against Lewis despite fighting

**Oliver McCall celebrates with promoter Don King after defending his WBC heavyweight title against former champ Larry Holmes.**

HOLLY STEIN

well into his 40s during a career that lasted nearly 30 years.

Now 53, McCall lives in Texas, is married to childhood sweetheart Alethia and has seven children. He remains connected to boxing as a trainer for various fighters.

McCall graciously took time to speak to THE RING about the best he faced in 10 key categories.

## BEST JAB

**Larry Holmes:** Larry Holmes definitely had the best jab. In the fight, (he) gave me a lot of problems by having such a quick, long right hand that made the jab more effective. He had a stiff jab. The jab I experienced from Larry Holmes was the jab that I seen him use as a young kid and he was heavyweight champion. I actually caught on to it a bit coming up and it helped me use my jab more. As a matter of fact, I think my jab is more like a Larry Holmes jab now than when I fought him, so I've learned some things.

## BEST DEFENSE

**Mike Hunter:** When I fought Orlin Norris in Florida, he had that peek-a-boo style – he was pretty crafty. He had good movement and timing. Because he was short, it was more difficult to hit (him). When I fought Mike "The Bounty" Hunter, he was so unorthodox (that it was) difficult to hit (him). (Hunter) had unorthodox movement. He'd put his right foot in front of his left foot, overstep and still make you miss and keep his balance. Mike Hunter made Mike Tyson look real bad in sparring. This guy was something to see. I'd pick Mike Hunter.

## FASTEST HANDS

**Buster Douglas:** He had nice handspeed for a heavyweight. A Buster Douglas in shape is a dangerous Buster Douglas for any heavyweight champion in the history of boxing. The Buster Douglas that beat Tyson would have given any heavyweight in the history of boxing trouble that day.

## BEST FOOTWORK

**Bruce Seldon:** When I fought Tony Tucker in Cleveland, his footwork was a little better than I thought it was going to be. Tony "TNT" Tucker, for him being 6-foot-5 and the way he had his footwork and boxing skills at that size, (was impressive). I fought Bruce Seldon and he'd have to be up there too. He kept his balance pretty good. Between the two, it would have to be Bruce Seldon.

## BEST CHIN

**Holmes:** Wow! That is a difficult one. That would have to go Larry Holmes. I cracked Larry Holmes with some shots.

## SMARTEST

**Holmes:** I learned more from Larry Holmes (than any other fighter); he taught me a lot. Hands down. As far as craftiness, definitely Larry Holmes. Him winning that fight with Ray Mercer, that's what made the fight with me that much harder, because I believe Larry Holmes thought, "I just whooped an Army sergeant." So he thought he could do the same with me.

## STRONGEST

**Frank Bruno:** Out of all my fights, Bruno was able to wrap me up, tie me up, wear me down, lean on me, hold me, elbow me. Look at the fight. I admire him, but it was a stretch as far as the refereeing of that fight.

## BEST PUNCHER

**Lennox Lewis:** There was two; both come from London. The first one was with Bruno. I got hit with a right hand (in the first round) ... and it made my eye swell. It made me timid coming in because if you hit it again, it's gonna split, and I never had my eye cut in a fight. The second one would have to be in the third round of the second fight with Lennox Lewis. The punch I got hit with – and I remember that punch – it was a wallop. I looked over his shoulder and saw his momma rooting for him to knock me out, and I thought of my momma not being there. When that man hit me I was going to retaliate, and I broke down. The overhand right that hit me sent me reeling into the ropes, and as I came back I could have just held him if I hadn't broken down. I thought, "Wow." I just shut down. I'd pick Lennox. I'm just going off what went through my mind. Bruno hit me dead in the eye, but it wasn't as brutal as far as the shock to my body or pain as that right hand was. When Lennox hit me with that right hand in the third round, that was a crunching right hand. It makes me think I don't know how I could take the punches that came after it with my hands down.

## BOXING SKILLS

**Holmes:** I would have to say Larry Holmes as far as pure boxing skills. Me at my best and him at 25 percent (when we fought) and (him) being champion when I was a kid. He's my dude as far as skills.

## BEST OVERALL

**Holmes:** Larry Holmes. It has to be Larry Holmes. As well as boxing skills, he could do the other things. He had an awesome jab. He learned how to box well. He learned not to make the same mistake twice. He learned when he got knocked down how to get up and still beat you down. Stuff like that. He had to put up with a lot of criticism. He was a great champion and it was a trip for me to face him.

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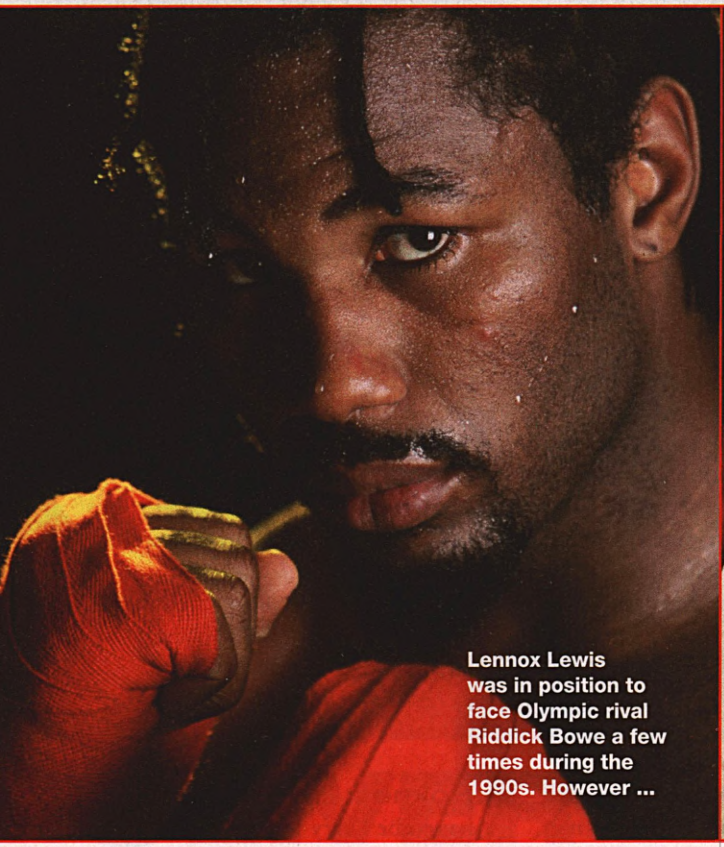
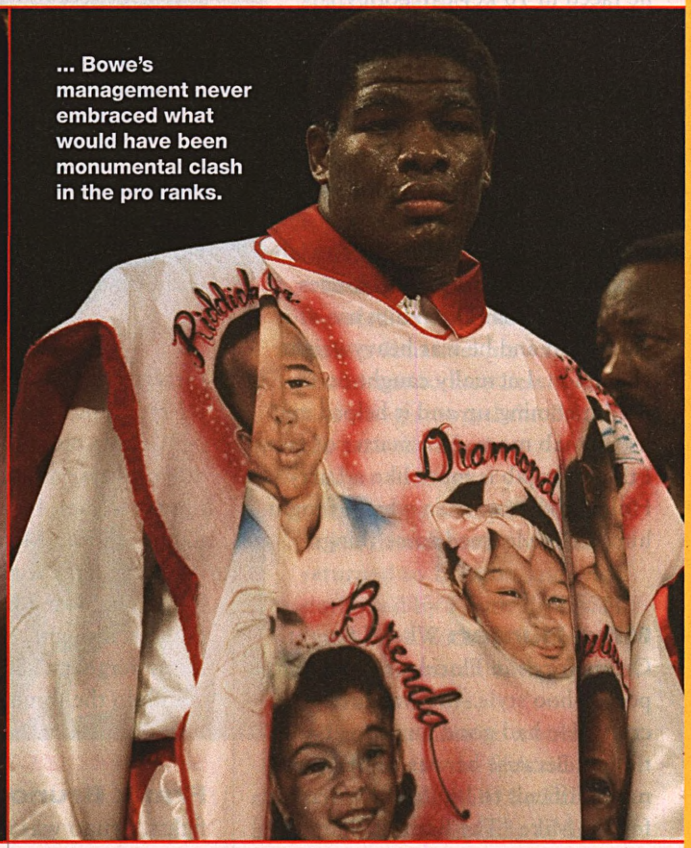
*Lee Holliday helped coordinate this feature. THE RING appreciates his assistance. Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright*

# FIGHTS OF FANTASY

BY TOM GRAY



Lennox Lewis was in position to face Olympic rival Riddick Bowe a few times during the 1990s. However ...



... Bowe's management never embraced what would have been monumental clash in the pro ranks.

# LENNOX LEWIS vs. RIDDICK BOWE

## THREE EXPERTS – A FIGHTER, A TRAINER AND A MEDIA MEMBER – TELL YOU HOW A MYTHICAL MATCHUP WOULD PLAY OUT

**One of the finest heavyweight championship fights never to** happen, this rerun of the 1988 Olympic super heavyweight final looked like a natural.

Lennox Lewis crushed Riddick Bowe in two rounds in Seoul to claim gold, and a potent rivalry was born. Surely they would hook up as professionals in a bid to secure their legacies and rake in millions? If only everything in boxing were that easy.

In November 1992, an unbeaten Bowe scored a 12-round unanimous decision over Evander Holyfield in one of the best heavyweight championship fights ever. The Brooklyn native was now the hottest property in the sport but, ironically, it was all downhill from there.

Rather than face Lewis, who was the WBC's No. 1 challenger, Bowe literally dropped that organization's belt in the trash. He fought twice (against undeserving challengers Michael Dokes and Jesse Ferguson) before losing the IBF and WBA titles (along with "lineal champion" status) to Holyfield in November 1993 and, despite winning a non-title bout decider, Bowe ate himself out of what could have been a glorious career.

Lewis was Bowe's complete antithesis. The colossal boxer-puncher picked up his rival's vacant belt, remained committed, steadily improved and overcame adversity. His shock defeat to Oliver McCall in September 1994 led to a link-up with acclaimed trainer Emanuel Steward, and the hard-hitting Londoner never looked back.

By the time Lewis unified the division by outpointing Holyfield in November 1999, Bowe was three years removed from world level and his time was up. Unfortunately, a multimillion-dollar superfight between two modern-day heavyweights was confined to fantasy.

But what if Lewis and Bowe had met when both men were at their best, on April 1, 1996? Three experts offer their opinions:



Tom Gray is Associate Editor for THE RING. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing

# LEWIS ★ TALE OF THE TAPE ★ BOWE

## HEAVYWEIGHT

| LEWIS | | BOWE |
|---|---|---|
| 30 | AGE | 27 |
| 28-1 (24 KOS) | RECORD | 38-1 (32 KOS) |
| 86 PERCENT | KO PERCENTAGE | 84 PERCENT |
| ORTHODOX | STANCE | ORTHODOX |
| 6 FEET 5 INCHES | HEIGHT | 6 FEET 5 INCHES |
| 84 INCHES | REACH | 81 INCHES |

### FIGHTER:

**Evander Holyfield**

FORMER UNDISPUTED CRUISERWEIGHT AND HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION

Riddick had a good jab, good handspeed. And he was the only big guy at that time who had a short game, too. Most big guys can't hit you with uppercuts (on the inside), but Bowe could hit you with everything. He was a very good fighter – very good. Lennox was a knowledgeable guy, very patient. He had long arms, he was very strong and he knew how to stick to a game plan. Lennox didn't get caught up with emotions; he just did what he had to do to win. Sometimes the fight could be boring, but he was always going to fight his fight. Lennox really amped things up in the last part of his career; he fought like a big man should and that allowed him to become the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. If Bowe and Lennox fought, it depends if it happens early or later. Emanuel Steward changed a lot in Lennox and made him a much better fighter. At one time, if you threw punches at Lennox, he just covered up and that cost him. Emanuel taught him how to hold, and you couldn't hit him the same. If they had fought before Emanuel Steward came in with Lennox, then I think Riddick Bowe would have won. But after Emanuel came in, I think Lennox Lewis wins the fight.

**Prediction: TIED***

### TRAINER:

**Ronnie Shields**

TRAINER OF ERISLANDY LARA

Lennox had a powerful jab and his right hand was just unbelievable. Combine that with all his other combinations and you had a very well-rounded fighter. Lennox did everything well – not just one thing – and you have to attribute a lot of that to the great Emanuel Steward. If you go back and look at Lennox before Emanuel and after Emanuel, you can see what a great job he did. That's what made him the fighter he became, and I think Lennox would say that himself. His jab and his balance improved and he became so much better. Now, the Bowe that beat Holyfield was great and that was down to Eddie Futch. Eddie knew all the styles of boxing and did tremendous work with Bowe. When Eddie left the team, he was replaced by Thell Torrence, and as good a trainer as Thell Torrence is, he's no Eddie Futch. The Bowe that fought Holyfield was already a good fighter, and I really thought he'd fight Lennox. It just never materialized. But if they had fought, I'd have favored Lennox. He was stronger, he lived better, he had the jab and he had the power. Riddick had a good jab and he was a tremendous inside fighter for a man of his size. But Lennox, for me, was the more powerful fighter.

**Prediction: LEWIS**

### MEDIA:

**Wally Matthews**

RING MAGAZINE CONTRIBUTOR

Bowe was a good boxer, he was gutsy and he could hit a little bit. He also had size because, at that time, there weren't too many 6-foot-5 heavyweights. Actually, there was a rumor that Bowe and (manager) Rock Newman were afraid of Lewis because here was a heavyweight who was even bigger. Lewis had the size, the jab and, like Bowe, he was very coordinated for such a large man. You don't often see that. But I'm ashamed to say that, coming out of the Tyson era, I didn't warm to Lennox immediately, and I've since apologized to him for that. I came to really admire him, particularly in the Holyfield fights. In hindsight, if Lewis and Bowe had fought as professionals, I have no doubt that Lewis wins. I was in Seoul for the gold medal final, and even though I felt the stoppage was premature, I thought Bowe was looking for a way out. The fact that Newman got Bowe to drop the belt in the trash tells you all you need to know. I really liked Bowe the night he beat Holyfield, and then I became more and more disappointed in him. His main drawback was that he was almost never in shape. I could tell that Bowe wasn't into it enough and Rock was only interested in making money.

**Prediction: LEWIS**

*Tale of the Tape stats are for a hypothetical fight in early April 1996, which would have been Lewis' fourth fight with Steward.

# RATINGS

Heavyweight contender Dillian Whyte is practically exploding with elation just seconds after knocking out unbeaten slugger Lucas Browne in chilling fashion on March 24 in London.

## POUND FOR POUND

1 **GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
Kazakhstan • 37-0-1 (33 KOs)

2 **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
U.S. • 32-0-0 (23 KOs)

3 **VASYL LOMACHENKO**
Ukraine • 10-1-0 (8 KOs)

4 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 49-1-2 (34 KOs)

5 **MIKEY GARCIA**
U.S. • 38-0-0 (30 KOs)

6 **SRISASKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
Thailand • 45-4-1 (40 KOs)

7 **NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 15-0-0 (13 KOs)

8 **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
U.S. • 23-0-0 (20 KOs)

9 **SERGEY KOVALEV**
Russia • 32-2-1 (28 KOs)

10 **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
Cuba • 17-1-0 (11 KOs)

**POUND FOR POUND:** No change.

**HEAVYWEIGHTS:** Unrated Lucas Browne was never the monster his fanged mouthguard portrayed, but Dillian Whyte still looked great in knocking him out and was lifted from No. 7 to No. 6 as a result. Joseph Parker (No. 3 last month) dropped a notch after losing a 12-round fight in which neither he nor his opponent, No. 1-rated Anthony Joshua, did anything that would be mistaken for "great."

**CRUISERWEIGHTS:** No change.

**LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS:** No change.

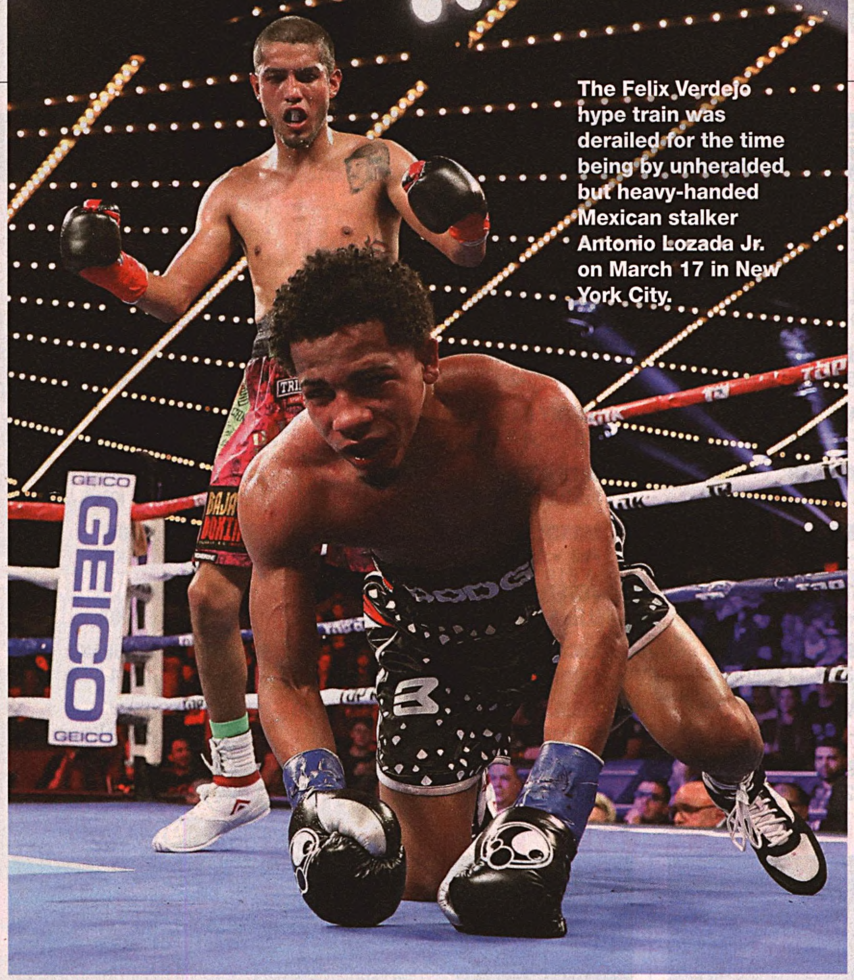
**SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS:** Caleb Truax (No. 4 last month) tried to follow up December's upset of James DeGale with a repeat performance, but DeGale won the rematch – a blood-soaked, clinch-filled headbutt contest – by unanimous decision to regain his title. Truax sank to No. 8 and DeGale went from No. 7 to No. 6.

**MIDDLEWEIGHTS:** Ryota Murata climbed from No. 8 to No. 6 after an unsurprising but solid win, an eighth-round stoppage of Emanuele Blandamura (unrated).

**JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS:** Jarrett Hurd picked up a second title and rose from No. 3 to No. 1 after a close but no less impressive victory over the notoriously tricky Erislandy Lara, who switched places with the winner. On the same card, Julian Williams won a majority decision against Nathaniel Gallimore (unrated) and moved up the list from No. 10 to No. 9.

**WELTERWEIGHTS:** No change.

**JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS:** Jose Ramirez (No. 8 last month) brought powerful social causes (water rights for farmers and the plight of immigrant laborers in Central California) and powerful bodyshots to an entertaining brawl with Amir Imam (unrated), winning a unanimous decision to seize a vacant title. Ramirez moved to No. 5 as a result.




The Felix Verdejo hype train was derailed for the time being by unheralded, but heavy-handed Mexican stalker Antonio Lozada Jr. on March 17 in New York City.

**LIGHTWEIGHTS:** After a 13-month layoff to recover from a motorcycle accident, the "next Tito" hopes were dashed once again as Felix Verdejo suffered the first loss of his pro career at the hands of dark horse Antonio Lozada Jr. Lozada entered the ratings at No. 10 while Verdejo, who was narrowly ahead on two scorecards when the ringside doctor stopped the fight with 23 seconds remaining, dropped off the list from No. 6.

**JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS:** No change.

**FEATHERWEIGHTS:** No change.

**JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS:** No change.

**BANTAMWEIGHTS:** No change.

**JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS:** No change.

**FLYWEIGHTS:** Former 108-pound titleholder Kosei Tanaka took the No. 7 spot after an impressive flyweight debut, winning every round before stopping Ronnie Baldonado (unrated) in the ninth. Tanaka's arrival pushed No. 10-rated Muhammad Waseem off the list, but the Pakistani returned two weeks later after Donnie Nietes (No. 1), who has already worn belts in three divisions, moved to 115. Competing with Verdejo for the biggest shock of the month, Daigo Higa (No. 2 last month) lost his title on the scale and then lost his undefeated record in the ring after Cristofer Rosales (No. 10 last month) stopped the Japanese power-puncher in Round 9. Higa slipped to No. 7 while Rosales packed up his new belt and moved to No. 4.

**JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS:** No change.

**STRAWWEIGHTS:** Ryuya Yamanaka rose from No. 6 to No. 4 after notching an eighth-round TKO of Moises Calleros (unrated) – a solid first defense of his WBO title.

## HEAVYWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT UNLIMITED*

**C (VACANT)**

**1 ANTHONY JOSHUA**
U.K. • 21-0-0 (20 KOs)

**2 DEONTAY WILDER**
U.S. • 40-0-0 (39 KOs)

**3 ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia • 34-1-0 (24 KOs)

**4 JOSEPH PARKER**
New Zealand • 24-1-0 (18 KOs)

**5 LUIS ORTIZ**
Cuba • 28-1-0 (24 KOs)

**7 DILLIAN WHYTE**
U.K. • 23-1-0 (17 KOs)

**6 KUBRAT PULEV**
Bulgaria • 25-1-0 (13 KOs)

**8 DOMINIC BREAZEALE**
U.S. • 19-1-0 (17 KOs)

**9 JARRELL MILLER**
U.S. • 20-0-1 (18 KOS)

**10 ADAM KOWNACKI**
U.S. • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)

## CRUISERWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1 OLEKSANDR USYK**
Ukraine • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)

**2 MURAT GASSIEV**
Russia • 26-0-0 (19 KOs)

**3 MAIRIS BRIEDIS**
Latvia • 23-1-0 (18 KOs)

**4 DENIS LEBEDEV**
Russia • 30-2-0 (22 KOs)

**5 YUNIER DORTICOS**
Cuba • 22-1-0 (21 KOs)

**6 KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**
Poland • 29-1-0 (18 KOs)

**7 MAKSIM VLASOV**
Russia • 42-2-0 (25 KOs)

**8 KEVIN LERENA**
S. Africa • 20-1-0 (9 KOs)

**9 ILUNGA MAKABU**
Congo • 21-2-0 (20 KOs)

**10 ANDREW TABITI**
U.S. • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)

## LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1 SERGEY KOVALEV**
Russia • 32-2-1 (28 KOs)

**2 ADONIS STEVENSON**
Canada • 29-1-0 (24 KOs)

**3 DMITRY BIVOL**
Russia • 13-0-0 (11 KOs)

**4 ELEIDER ALVAREZ**
Colombia • 23-0-0 (11 KOs)

**5 OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK**
Ukraine • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)

**6 ARTUR BETERBIEV**
Russia • 12-0-0 (12 KOs)

**7 SULLIVAN BARRERA**
Cuba • 21-2-0 (14 KOs)

**8 BADOU JACK**
Sweden • 22-1-2 (13 KOs)

**9 MARCUS BROWNE**
U.S. • 21-0-0 (16 KOs)

**10 JOE SMITH JR.**
U.S. • 23-2-0 (19 KOs)

## SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1 GEORGE GROVES**
U.K. • 28-3-0 (20 KOs)

**2 GILBERTO RAMIREZ**
Mexico • 37-0-0 (25 KOs)

**3 CALLUM SMITH**
U.K. • 24-0-0 (17 KOs)

**5 DAVID BENAVIDEZ**
U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)

**6 JOSE UZCATEGUI**
Venezuela • 27-2-0 (23 KOs)

**7 JAMES DEGALE**
U.K. • 24-2-1 (14 KOs)

**8 ANTHONY DIRRELL**
U.S. • 31-1-1 (24 KOs)

**4 CALEB TRUAX**
U.S. • 29-4-2 (18 KOs)

**9 CHRIS EUBANK JR.**
U.K. • 26-2-0 (20 KOs)

**10 JUERGEN BRAEHMER**
Germany • 49-3-0 (35 KOs)

# RATINGS

*Through fights of April 15, 2018*

## MIDDLEWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS*

- **C** **CANELO ALVAREZ** Mexico • 49-1-2 (34 KOs)
- **1** **GENNADY GOLOVKIN** Kaz. • 37-0-1 (33 KOs)
- **2** **DANIEL JACOBS** U.S. • 33-2-0 (29 KOs)
- **3** **BILLY JOE SAUNDERS** U.K. • 26-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **4** **SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO** Ukraine • 12-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **5** **JERMALL CHARLO** U.S. • 26-0-0 (20 KOs)
- **6** **RYOTA MURATA** Japan • 14-1-0 (11 KOs)
- **7** **DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **8** **DAVID LEMIEUX** Canada • 38-4-0 (33 KOs)
- **9** **HASSAN N'DAM** Cameroon • 36-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **10** **GARY O'SULLIVAN** Ireland • 27-2-0 (19 KOs)

## JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS*

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JARRETT HURD** U.S. • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **2** **JERMELL CHARLO** U.S. • 30-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **ERISLANDY LARA** Cuba • 25-3-2 (14 KOs)
- **4** **SADAM ALI** U.S. • 26-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **5** **BRIAN CASTANO** Argentina • 15-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **6** **LIAM SMITH** U.K. • 26-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **AUSTIN TROUT** U.S. • 31-4-0 (17 KOs)
- **8** **MICHEL SORO** France • 32-2-1 (21 KOs)
- **9** **JULIAN WILLIAMS** U.S. • 25-1-1 (15 KOs)
- **10** **MACIEJ SULECKI** Poland • 26-0-0 (10 KOs)

## WELTERWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS*

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **KEITH THURMAN** U.S. • 28-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **2** **ERROL SPENCE** U.S. • 23-0-0 (20 KOs)
- **3** **SHAWN PORTER** U.S. • 28-2-1 (17 KOs)
- **4** **DANNY GARCIA** U.S. • 34-1-0 (20 KOs)
- **5** **JEFF HORN** Australia • 18-0-1 (12 KOs)
- **6** **MANNY PACQUIAO** Phil. • 59-7-2 (38 KOs)
- **7** **JESSIE VARGAS** U.S. • 28-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **8** **LUCAS MATTHYSSE** Argentina • 39-4-0 (36 KOs)
- **9** **EGIDIJUS KAVALIAUSKAS** Lithuania • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **10** **YORDENIS UGAS** Cuba • 21-3-0 (10 KOs)

## JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS*

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **MIKEY GARCIA** U.S. • 38-0-0 (30 KOs)
- **2** **REGIS PROGRAIS** U.S. • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **VIKTOR POSTOL** Ukraine • 29-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **4** **KIRYL RELIKH** Belarus • 22-2-0 (19 KOs)
- **5** **JOSE RAMIREZ** U.S. • 22-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **6** **ANTONIO OROZCO** U.S. • 27-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **7** **JOSH TAYLOR** U.K. • 12-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **8** **EDUARD TROYANOVSKY** Russia • 27-1-0 (24 KOs)
- **9** **SERGEY LIPINETS** Russia • 13-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **10** **IVAN BARANCHYK** Russia • 18-0-0 (11 KOs)

James DeGale (right) regained his IBF belt with a decision over Caleb Truax in an ugly, bloody rematch on April 7.

Jose Uzcategui confidently walked Andre Dirrell down to a stoppage in their rematch on March 3.

## LIGHTWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS*

- **C** **JORGE LINARES** Venezuela • 44-3-0 (27 KOs)
- **1** **MIKEY GARCIA** U.S. • 38-0-0 (30 KOs)
- **2** **ROBERT EASTER** U.S. • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **3** **RAYMUNDO BELTRAN** Mexico • 35-7-1 (21 KOs)
- **4** **RICHARD COMMEY** Ghana • 26-2-0 (23 KOs)
- **5** **ANTHONY CROLLA** U.K. • 33-6-3 (13 KOs)
- **6** **LUKE CAMPBELL** U.K. • 17-2-0 (14 KOs)
- **7** **DEJAN ZLATICANIN** Montenegro • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **8** **YVAN MENDY** France • 40-4-1 (19 KOs)
- **9** **JAVIER FORTUNA** Dom. Rep. • 33-2-1 (23 KOs)
- **10** **ANTONIO LOZADA JR.** Mexico • 39-2-0 (33 KOs)

## JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS*

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **VASYL LOMACHENKO** Ukraine • 10-1-0 (8 KOs)
- **2** **MIGUEL BERCHELT** Mexico • 33-1-0 (29 KOs)
- **3** **GERVONTA DAVIS** U.S. • 19-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **4** **ALBERTO MACHADO** P.R. • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **FRANCISCO VARGAS** Mexico • 25-1-2 (18 KOs)
- **6** **TEVIN FARMER** U.S. • 25-4-1 (5 KOs)
- **7** **MIGUEL ROMAN** Mexico • 59-12-0 (46 KOs)
- **8** **JEZREEL CORRALES** Panama • 22-2-0 (8 KOs)
- **9** **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico • 66-10-0 (54 KOs)
- **10** **CHRISTOPHER DIAZ** Puerto Rico • 23-0-0 (15 KOs)

## FEATHERWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS*

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **LEO SANTA CRUZ** U.S. • 34-1-1 (19 KOs)
- **2** **GARY RUSSELL JR.** U.S. • 28-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **3** **CARL FRAMPTON** U.K. • 24-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **4** **OSCAR VALDEZ** Mexico • 24-0-0 (19 KOs)
- **5** **LEE SELBY** U.K. • 26-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **6** **ABNER MARES** Mexico • 31-2-1 (15 KOs)
- **7** **JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** U.S. • 26-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **8** **JESUS ROJAS** P.R. • 26-1-2 (19 KOs)
- **9** **JOSH WARRINGTON** U.K. • 26-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **10** **SCOTT QUIGG** U.K. • 34-2-2 (25 KOs)

## JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS*

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX** Cuba • 17-1-0 (11 KOs)
- **2** **JESSIE MAGDALENO** U.S. • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **REY VARGAS** Mexico • 31-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **4** **DANIEL ROMAN** U.S. • 24-2-1 (9 KOs)
- **5** **DIEGO DE LA HOYA** Mexico • 20-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **6** **MOISES FLORES** Mexico • 25-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **7** **ISAAC DOGBOE** Ghana • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **8** **RYOSUKE IWASA** Japan • 25-2-0 (16 KOs)
- **9** **JULIO CEJA** Mexico • 32-2-0 (28 KOs)
- **10** **TOMOKI KAMEDA** Japan • 34-2-0 (20 KOs)

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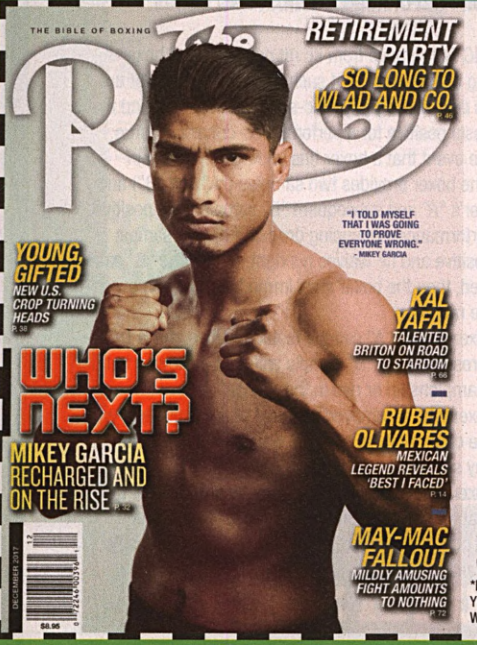


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# RATINGS

*Through fights of April 15, 2018*

## BANTAMWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**
**1 ZOLANI TETE**
S. Africa • 26-3-0 (21 KOs)
**2 JAMIE MCDONNELL**
U.K. • 29-2-1 (13 KOs)
**3 RYAN BURNETT**
U.K. • 19-0-0 (9 KOs)
**4 JUAN CARLOS PAYANO**
Dom. Rep. • 20-1-0 (9 KOs)
**5 ZHANAT ZHAKIYANOV**
Kaz. • 27-2-0 (18 KOs)
**6 LIBORIO SOLIS**
Venezuela • 25-5-1 (11 KOs)
**7 LEE HASKINS**
U.K. • 35-4-0 (14 KOs)
**8 EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
P.R. • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)
**9 PAUL BUTLER**
U.K. • 26-1-0 (14 KOs)
**10 OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina • 48-2-2 (25 KOs)

## JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS*

**C SRISASKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
Thailand • 45-4-1 (40 KOs)
**1 NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 15-0-0 (13 KOs)
**2 JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
Mexico • 36-3-0 (25 KOs)
**3 KHALID YAFAI**
U.K. • 23-0-0 (14 KOs)
**4 JERWIN ANCAJAS**
Phil. • 29-1-1 (20 KOs)
**5 RAU'SHEE WARREN**
U.S. • 15-2-0 (4 KOs)
**6 ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua • 46-2-0 (38 KOs)
**7 MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
Puerto Rico • 17-3-0 (14 KOs)
**8 CARLOS CUADRAS**
Mexico • 36-3-1 (27 KOs)
**9 JONAS SULTAN**
Phil. • 14-3-0 (9 KOs)
**10 REX TSO**
China • 22-0-0 (13 KOs)

## FLYWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**
**1 ARTEM DALAKIAN**
Ukraine • 16-0-0 (11 KOs)
**2 MORUTI MTHALANE**
S. Africa • 35-2-0 (24 KOs)
**3 ANDREW SELBY**
U.K. • 10-0-0 (5 KOs)
**4 CRISTOFER ROSALES**
Nicaragua • 27-3-0 (18 KOs)
**5 SHO KIMURA**
Japan • 16-1-2 (9 KOs)
**6 KOSEI TANAKA**
Japan • 11-0-0 (7 KOs)
**7 DAIGO HIGA**
Japan • 15-1-0 (15 KOs)
**8 MASAYUKI KURODA**
Japan • 29-7-3 (16 KOs)
**9 FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
Mexico • 27-4-1 (19 KOs)
**10 MUHAMMAD WASEEM**
Pakistan • 8-0-0 (6 KOs)

## JR. FLYWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS*

**C RYOICHI TAGUCHI**
Japan • 27-2-2 (12 KOs)
**1 KEN SHIRO**
Japan • 12-0-0 (6 KOs)
**2 MILAN MELINDO**
Phil. • 37-3-0 (13 KOs)
**3 CARLOS CANIZALES**
Venezuela • 20-0-1 (16 KOs)
**4 PEDRO GUEVARA**
Mexico • 30-3-1 (17 KOs)
**5 GANIGAN LOPEZ**
Mexico • 29-7-0 (18 KOs)
**6 HEKKIE BUDLER**
S. Africa • 31-3-0 (10 KOs)
**7 FELIX ALVARADO**
Nicaragua • 32-2-0 (28 KOs)
**8 AKIRA YAEGASHI**
Japan • 26-6-0 (14 KOs)
**9 ANGEL ACOSTA**
P.R. • 17-1-0 (17 KOs)
**10 REY LORETO**
Phil. • 24-14-0 (16 KOs)

Ryota Murata methodically wore down hapless European champ Emanuele Blandamura to an eighth-round TKO.

Jarrett Hurd's victory over Erislandy Lara made him the top 154-pounder.

## STRAWWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**
**1 WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
Thailand • 49-0-0 (17 KOs)
**2 KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART**
Thailand • 17-0-0 (7 KOs)
**3 HIROTO KYOGUCHI**
Japan • 9-0-0 (7 KOs)
**4 RYUYA YAMANAKA**
Japan • 16-2-0 (5 KOs)
**4 BYRON ROJAS**
Nicaragua • 24-3-3 (10 KOs)
**5 JOSE ARGUMEDO**
Mexico • 21-4-1 (13 KOs)
**7 SIMPHIWE KHONCO**
S. Africa • 18-5-0 (7 KOs)
**8 LEROY ESTRADA**
Panama • 16-2-0 (6 KOs)
**9 CARLOS BUITRAGO**
Nicaragua • 30-3-1 (17 KOs)
**10 TATSUYA FUKUHARA**
Japan • 19-6-6 (7 KOs)

## HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED
*RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM*

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. THE RING's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the RING title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

THE RING Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

### THE RING POLICY ON RATED BOXERS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS

THE RING will remove from its ratings any rated boxer — including a champion — if such boxer at some point undergoes drug testing (Olympic-style or otherwise) and that boxer tests positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

In the event that a boxer has undergone testing in which the boxer provides two samples ("A" and "B") and the boxer's "A" and subsequent "B" samples test positive for a performance-enhancing drug or if his "A" sample tests positive and he waives his right to have the "B" sample tested, then the boxer shall immediately be removed from the ratings.

A boxer whose "A" sample tested positive and is awaiting the results of his "B" sample will not be allowed to fight for a championship or rise in the ratings.

A boxer who is removed because of a positive test will have the opportunity to earn his way back into the ratings after any suspension period is completed.

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# DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

ALL THAT REMAINS FOR **ANTHONY JOSHUA VS. DEONTAY WILDER** TO HAPPEN IS HAMMERING OUT THE PAYCHECKS – WHICH IS EVERYTHING, IT TURNS OUT

By **Wallace Matthews** • Painting by **Patrick Killian**

Contrasting personalities and styles: the fiery passion of Wilder's power-punching and the ice-cold calculation of Joshua's technique.

**In mid-November 1970,** Joe Frazier, the undefeated heavyweight champion of the world, had an easy night's work against Bob Foster, the light heavyweight champion.

Three weeks later, Muhammad Ali, the former heavyweight champion of the world defeated only by the U.S. government, had an extremely tough night against Oscar Bonavena, having to go to the final seconds of a 15-round bout to pull out a TKO win.

Precisely three months and one day later, Frazier

and Ali were in the ring at Madison Square Garden – and on a closed-circuit telecast hookup worldwide – in what was, up to that point, the most lucrative prizefight of all time and remains the most famous, and arguably the best, heavyweight title fight in boxing history.

So why does it seem so difficult for Deontay Wilder and Anthony Joshua to make a deal?

Because times are different now.

Ali and Frazier fought in a world in which social media and pay-per-view TV had yet to be invented. There were little to no "revenue streams" from sponsorships or merchandising or foreign sales. Most of a fighter's money came from ticket sales at the venue. The live broadcasting of fights into theaters on closed-circuit TV was still in its infancy, so much so that both Ali and Frazier passed up Madison Square Garden's offer of $1.25 million each against 35 percent of the gross, opting instead for flat fees of $2.5 million from Jack Kent Cooke. After all the money was counted, the percentage deal would have netted each man approximately $6 million.

In the world inhabited by Wilder and Joshua, the revenue streams are aplenty and the potential to reap a bonanza quite real. This is a world in which Conor McGregor, an MMA superstar but a first-time starter in boxing, could pull down $100 million for a pro debut, and in which Floyd Mayweather could collect a reported $240 million to fight Manny Pacquiao.

So there is a lot at stake for both fighters, and both are rightfully wary of leaving any crumbs on the table.

In early April, as reported exclusively by THE RING, Eddie Hearn, Joshua's promoter, offered Al Haymon, the adviser to Wilder, a flat fee of $12.5 million to fight a unification bout at a place yet to be determined sometime in 2018.

There was no offer of a percentage of PPV revenue, either in the U.S. or the U.K., any sharing in sponsorships, merchandising or foreign rights. It was basically, "Here's your end. Take it or leave it."

"It's five times more than Wilder's biggest purse," Hearn said. "If you offered Anthony Joshua five times his biggest purse, he would jump at it."

Not surprisingly, the Wilder camp not only did not jump at it, they didn't even consider this to be a serious offer, and was formulating a response as we went to press.

"It was a bullshit offer," said a member of the Wilder

**The Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier rivalry played out during an era when boxing economics were far simpler than today.**

**Britain's No. 1 boxing attraction, Anthony Joshua, and the U.K.'s top promoter, Eddie Hearn, have formed a very successful business partnership.**

camp, who asked not to be named. "It's not like he threw something out that was even in the realm of reasonableness. He's trying to buy us out? Maybe we'll turn around and say, 'OK, motherfucker, how about we buy you out?'"

To which Hearn shrugged: "I've never been in a situation yet where you make an offer and the other side goes, 'Oh, sure. Lovely.'"

If you think it sounds like a conversation between Michael Corleone and Moe Greene, you're not far off. Throughout history, boxing negotiations have always been fraught with threats, posturing and saber-rattling, and as the pots of gold have grown bigger, the rhetoric has gotten even nastier.

The bottom line is, although Wilder and Joshua would easily be the most compelling heavyweight fight in a generation, going back to the Mike Tyson-Lennox Lewis fight of 2002, it will not be an easy fight to make.

The reason is that one fighter, Joshua, appears to be holding all the cards.

That's unlike the Ali-Frazier fight, in which both fighters needed one another. Frazier was the champion but needed to legitimize his title with a victory over Ali, who was deposed not by an opponent but by the U.S. courts and athletic commissions, (and Ali frankly needed the cash after nearly four years in exile). In this battle, Wilder needs Joshua more than Joshua needs Wilder.

The unbeaten Brit has sold approximately a quarter of a million tickets for his last three fights in the U.K.: 90,000 for his WBA title-winning performance against Wladimir Klitschko in Wembley Stadium last April, and about 80,000 each for a title defense against Carlos Takam and a unification win over Joseph Parker at Cardiff's Principality Stadium.

And considering how gaga the vociferous British fight public is for the best heavyweight from the U.K. since Lewis, it is likely he could do similar numbers – and pocket $10-$15 million paydays – to fight the likes of Alexander Povetkin, Dillian Whyte and Jarrell "Big Baby" Miller. A fight against the comebacking Tyson Fury would be a blockbuster over there.

Even Lou DiBella, anointed by Haymon as Wilder's promoter of record, acknowledges, "In the U.K., Joshua is a rock star of the highest level. He's proved he doesn't need a co-star to sell out a stadium."

In short, Joshua would be just fine without Wilder, at least for now. He has enough low-risk, high-reward options available in the U.K. to keep him busy for at least a year.

By contrast, Wilder is relatively unknown, even in the United States. His last two defenses, against Bermane Stiverne and Luis Ortiz, failed to sell out Brooklyn's Barclays Center, and like Joshua, he has never appeared in a fight offered on pay-per-view in the U.S.

## DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

Deontay Wilder's thrilling 10th-round stoppage of Luis Ortiz on March 3 drew a crowd of 14,000 and a strong rating on Showtime, but the American puncher remains the "B-side" to Anthony Joshua.

ANTHONY GEATHERS

And though the American heavyweight's dramatic KO over Ortiz was a ratings success for Showtime – it pulled in a peak audience of 1.2 million viewers, putting it well ahead of the numbers Joshua drew for his wins over Klitschko, Takam and Parker on the U.S. subscription cable network – Hearn has still taken a hard line in regard to the Wilder camp.

"Anthony's the A-side of this fight," he said. "Without us, Wilder has nowhere to go. There really is no other fight out there that will make him any money other than Anthony Joshua."

Hence Hearn's "take it or leave it" posture, which came with a caveat: "If they don't accept it, the fight's not dead. We'll just go and fight our (WBA) mandatory against Povetkin."

Hearn also cautioned that if the fight didn't take place within the next 10 months, it was unlikely to happen until mid-to-late 2019 because of the mandatory obligations of Joshua, who also holds the belts of the IBF and the WBO.

"The problem for Wilder is if he doesn't jump on this fight now, we fight Povetkin first, then Fury comes back and we fight him," Hearn said. "And then you're talking about waiting a year-and-a-half."

Another complication is the narrow window of seasonable weather for an outdoor fight in England, where the fight is likely to take place if only because the spectacle of 90,000 fans at a heavyweight title fight – unseen in the U.S. since the Joe Louis era – adds an element to the bout that makes it attractive to media outlets that normally would shrug at a prizefight.

Veteran manager Shelly Finkel, who is the front man for Haymon in the negotiation with Hearn, had been optimistic before receiving Hearn's offer on April 10. He was hopeful that Hearn would offer Wilder the short end of a 60-40 revenue split, and that there would be provisions for a second and possibly a third fight.

"The ideal situation would be we fight one fight over there (in the U.K.), and the second one over here, or vice versa," Finkel said. "If he comes back with that and says on a rematch, the winner of the first fight will take 60 and the loser 40, then we'll do a deal tomorrow. But let's see what the offer is. If it's anything within reason, we'll do it."

Upon receiving Hearn's $12.5 million ultimatum, however, Finkel clammed up.

"No comment at all on this," he said. "We're formulating a response."

It wasn't hard to guess what the response would be.

Even Bob Arum, a disinterested party in this one, said he would advise Wilder not to accept the deal. "I would never let a fighter take that deal," Arum said. "There's no schmuck insurance."

By that, he meant a percentage of the revenue to avoid the trap Ali and Frazier fell into nearly a half-century ago.

DiBella called the offer insulting, to which Hearn responded, "If I wanted to insult Wilder, I would have offered him $5 million."

To add to the contentiousness, Hearn took to referring to Finkel in public as "Shirley."

And in truth, there are legitimate issues that need to be ironed out.

For one, while there is no doubt that Joshua is the bigger ticket seller, the likelihood is that a Las Vegas casino could guarantee a higher site fee than even Wembley, because ticket prices are necessarily lower in a 90,000-seat venue.

For another, if the fight is held in England, the time difference creates problems on both sides of the Atlantic. If the fight starts at a standard 11 p.m. in England, it airs at 5 p.m. in New York, which both sides concede would reduce the U.S. pay-per-view revenue by as much as 40 percent. Conversely, if the fight were held in the U.S., or pushed back to, say, 1 or 2 a.m. in the U.K. to create a more saleable start time in America, it would cut the British PPV sales by about the same amount.

Given that Joshua routinely pulls in 300,000-400,000 PPV buys in England for his fights, while his showdown with Klitschko garnered a staggering 1.5 million PPV buys, that is a concession Hearn is not likely to make. So no matter what time the fight is scheduled for, one market is likely to suffer.

"Having a pay-per-view in prime time in the U.K. and in the afternoon in the U.S. has never been a recipe for huge success," said Stephen Espinoza, the president of Showtime Sports, which would handle the U.S. pay-per-view.

And if there is one issue both sides agree on, it is that neither fighter is a proven PPV draw in America, which is why estimates of the total revenue vary widely, from a minimum of $50 million to upward of $100 million.

"It's a very big fight, the biggest in boxing, but both are incredibly untested in the American pay-per-view market, and when you look at some of the poor numbers generated by some incredibly good fights, like Kovalev-Ward, I don't think you can say anything with confidence," Hearn said. "We truly won't know how much money is in this fight until all is said and done."

And all seem to agree on an essential truth of boxing, and especially heavyweight boxing: Delaying a big fight is an accident waiting to happen.

"There's always risks," Finkel said. "Someone could get cut in training. Someone could get beat."

"Of course there's always the danger one of them could lose and cost everybody a huge payday," Hearn said. "Anything can happen."

The roadblocks in front of the Wilder-Joshua fight are hardly new in boxing history.

In fact, the smoothness of the Ali-Frazier negotiation is something of an anomaly.

In 1987, the Mike Tyson-Michael Spinks fight hit a dead end because Jimmy Jacobs (Tyson's manager) and Butch Lewis (who ran Spinks' career) couldn't stand to be in the same room with one another. They spoke only through intermediaries, of which Finkel was one. But the deal really didn't get made until Tyson, fed up with the delays, ordered his people to give Spinks what he wanted to get the fight made.

Two years earlier, Marvin Hagler had to grab the reins of a stalled negotiation to fight Thomas Hearns by insisting that the deal get done at any cost. And Lewis had to do the same to get the Tyson fight finalized.

Even the Floyd Mayweather-Manny Pacquiao fight, delayed for years by the demands and counterdemands of both fighters, finally came to fruition in a hurry in 2015, although with the help of a mediator, CBS honcho Les Moonves, who stepped in when neither side could come to an agreement.

Asked if Wilder-Joshua could use a similar third-party intervention, DiBella scoffed: "Who the fuck needs a mediator? This isn't the Middle East peace talks!"

And yet the possibility looms that the real reason the fight is not coming together quickly is that one or both fighters isn't quite ready for the challenge. There is ample precedent for that as well.

The prime example of a fight that never did get to the ring was a proposed showdown between Lewis and Riddick Bowe. They had met in the gold medal final at the 1988 Olympics at Seoul, with Lewis the winner by stoppage. But it wasn't money that prevented that one; it was the fear Bowe's manager, Rock Newman, had for a possible loss to Lewis derailing his gravy train.

So he had Bowe throw his WBC title belt in a trash can and fight two tomato cans – a washed-up Michael Dokes and sparring partner Jesse Ferguson – before beginning the downward spiral of his career in the "Fan Man" fight against Evander Holyfield.

There is always the chance that will happen with Wilder and Joshua, though with the amount of money at stake, that seems highly unlikely.

"It's definitely encouraging that at least there is a dialogue," Espinoza said. "The parties are far apart, so there is a long way to go. There's no easy solution to this. But I don't think we're in for a prolonged wait."

In fact, Espinoza believes Wilder and Joshua will not only fight once, but perhaps as many as three times.

"This kind of heavyweight bout is going to generate massive mainstream interest. You're going to see people coming back to boxing that weren't even interested in Mayweather-McGregor," Espinoza said. "Our hope is that this could be the start of an Ali-Frazier-type trilogy. These guys could fight two or three times over the next five or six years." RING

OFTEN UNAPPRECIATED DURING HIS 14-YEAR PRO CAREER, THE BOXING ENIGMA THAT WAS **LENNOX LEWIS** ULTIMATELY SECURED HIS PLACE AMONG ALL-TIME GREAT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONS

By **Tom Gray**

# GOING THE DISTANCE

Lennox Lewis finally achieved his goal of becoming the undisputed heavyweight champion after outpointing a doggedly determined Evander Holyfield over 12 rounds on November 13, 1999, in Las Vegas.

## INTRODUCTIONS

Ladies and gentlemen, introducing, from London, England, weighing in at 245 pounds, with a record of 41 wins, 2 losses, 1 draw and 32 knockouts ... the 1988 Olympic super heavyweight gold medalist ... the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world ... LENNOX ... LEWIS!

Cue rapturous cheering and applause. »

Always wholesome and devoid of controversy, Lennox Lewis was still a boxing enigma. A 6-foot-5 modern heavyweight with imposing physical advantages over most of his opposition, the colossal Brit was more pugilist than power-puncher. More smarts than smash. More risk-assessor than risk-taker.

Through the course of a 14-year professional career, Lewis had more critics than perhaps all his contemporaries combined. However, in the final analysis, this first-ballot Hall of Famer established himself as the finest heavyweight of his generation. He took the brutal game of boxing, made it chess and bellowed "checkmate" from the top of the mountain.

Like his predecessor, Larry Holmes, it was fated for Lewis to be unappreciated during his time. Holmes followed the Ali era. Lewis followed the Tyson era. But, again, like Holmes, the Lewis years have aged like fine wine. After all, how many great heavyweight championship fights have there been since Lewis' retirement in 2004?

Even though Lewis defeated every man he ever faced as a professional, his road to the top was not without incident or drama. There was controversy and there was harrowing defeat but – perhaps the biggest surprise of all – there was a happy ending and a feeling of perpetual triumph.

Here the former undisputed heavyweight champion revisits 12 fights that helped forge a very special legacy. Seconds out!

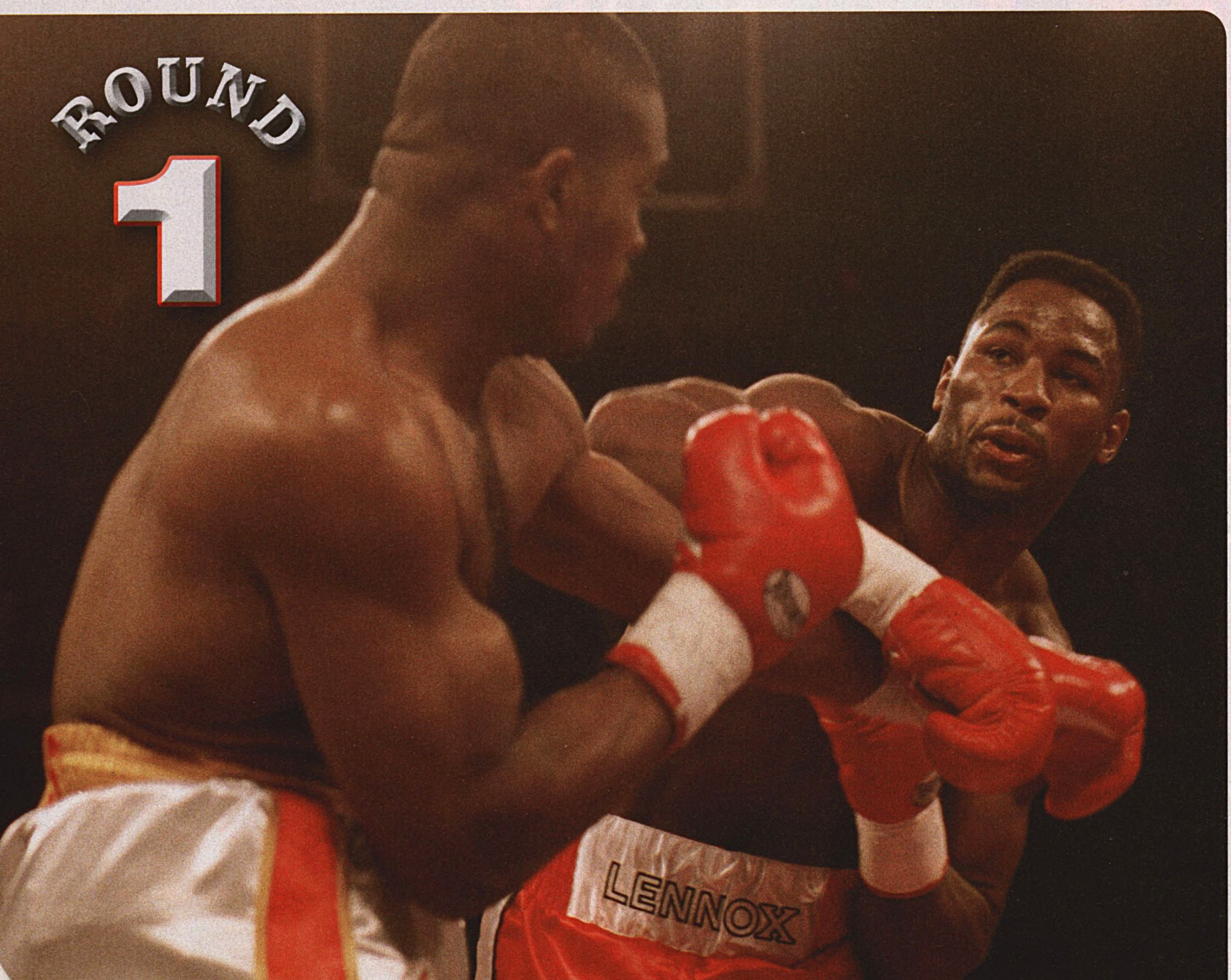
## ROUND 1
### RAZOR RUDDOCK
**OCTOBER 31, 1992. LONDON:**

Me and Razor Ruddock trained together before the 1988 Olympics (in Seoul). I had him helping me because he was a professional at the time, and we had some great battles in sparring. Years later, when he came over to England to fight me, he said, "Lennox, I still have your blood on my boots!" It was war because those are fighting words and that's all I could think about when I got in the ring. (laughs)

**LEWIS TKO 2**

## ROUND 2
### FRANK BRUNO
**OCTOBER 1, 1993. CARDIFF, WALES:**

The fight was outdoors and it was so cold they had to wrap us in blankets. I'd looked at Bruno's jab




BOB THOMAS

and thought I could get away from it, but the fight turned out to be an awakening. In the first couple of rounds, I'm like, "Hey, this guy's jab is really good!" Later, he hit me and I reacted with a left hook but, let me tell you, I didn't even aim. I just threw the hook and he was in the way. **LEWIS TKO 7**

## ROUND 3
## LIONEL BUTLER

**MAY 13, 1995. SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA:**
It was my first fight under (trainer) Emanuel Steward, but Pepe Correa (Lewis' previous trainer) was in Butler's corner. If you watch that fight, you can see Pepe shouting, "We're gonna knock him out! We're gonna knock him out!" First, Pepe had been my trainer and he should know better. Second, shortly after the fight started, I knew that it was me who was going to win by knockout. Butler didn't have the athleticism. **LEWIS TKO 5**

## ROUND 4
## RAY MERCER

**MAY 10, 1996. NEW YORK:**
He put me through hell for a couple of reasons. One, they dropped the ring size down to 15-16 feet (square) overnight, and every time I jabbed and stepped back, I touched the ropes. Also, Mercer did a smart thing in that every time he let his punches go, he smothered me afterwards. That was a test for me – and a good test – because it proved that I had heart. He came with his punches and I came back with mine. I passed the test. **LEWIS MD 10**

## ROUND 5
## OLIVER MCCALL II

**FEBRUARY 7, 1997. LAS VEGAS:**
I was prepared for absolutely everything, because I wanted this man in the ring. But, suddenly, he starts crying and goes through a breakdown. I'm in the corner and Manny says, "What are you doing? Get him!" I said, "Manny, he's crying!" Manny shouted, "What the hell? Go and beat him up even more!" McCall was one of two fighters to beat me but, at my best, 10 times out of 10, I'd beat him easily. If I didn't lose a fight, I wouldn't know how great I am. **LEWIS TKO 5**

## ROUND 6
## ANDREW GOLOTA

**OCTOBER 4, 1997. ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY:**
(laughs) My mother cooked for me before all my fights and she knows I like Scotch bonnet peppers. Before the Golota, fight my stomach started to hurt and I asked my mom what

type of peppers she used. She said, "I couldn't get Scotch bonnet, so I used other ones." I get in the ring, my stomach is really hurting and then Golota pisses me off by looking at me funny. I was in no mood to hang around. The fans see the fight, but they don't know the stories leading up to it. (laughs) **LEWIS KO 1**

## ROUND 7
## SHANNON BRIGGS
**MARCH 28, 1998. ATLANTIC CITY:**

That was a battle between two young heavyweights. It was two guys who were the future. Briggs was making a lot of noise in New York, saying he was going to be the next champion. He said that he was going to knock me out. His best punches were the jab and a quick left hook, and he had good handspeed. But once I solved that problem, he was history. Briggs showed a lot of heart in that fight. **LEWIS TKO 5**

## ROUND 8
## EVANDER HOLYFIELD
**MARCH 13, 1999. NEW YORK:**

I beat him but nobody in America wanted me to win the undisputed championship. We had the British crowd over in New York – it was like the whole of England was there – and it was just disappointing that people traveled all that way for a draw. Holyfield knew he'd lost and we still argue about that to this day. (laughs) He says that's what the judges decided and he says it was a close fight. (laughs) **DRAW**

## ROUND 9
## EVANDER HOLYFIELD II
**NOVEMBER 13, 1999. LAS VEGAS:**

I did it once and now they want me to do it again. Holyfield knows I'm dangerous and now he's prepared for me. When you watch that fight, you can see that Holyfield really tried, but I just had to do the same thing again. He boxed a better fight, but he lost because of history and it's no fault of his. He lost because a good big guy always beats a good small guy. **LEWIS UD 12**

## ROUND 10
## HASIM RAHMAN II
**NOVEMBER 17, 2001. LAS VEGAS:**

# FIVE THAT GOT AWAY

**Lennox Lewis' record reads like** a Who's Who of the heavyweight division during the 1990s. Lewis, who turned pro in June 1989 after winning a gold medal in the 1988 Olympic games, faced respected veterans (Tony Tucker, Frank Bruno, Oliver McCall, Frans Botha), feared contenders (Donovan Ruddock, David Tua, Tommy Morrison, Andrew Golota), American hopes (Shannon Briggs, Michael Grant, Hasim Rahman), fellow Olympic gold medalists (Tyrell Biggs, Ray Mercer), and future Hall of Famers (Evander Holyfield, Mike Tyson, Vitali Klitschko).

Only the golden age of the 1970s rivals the '90s in terms of the depth of the heavyweight division, and there were a few standouts who Lewis did not fight. Here are five, with Lewis' comments on each fighter.

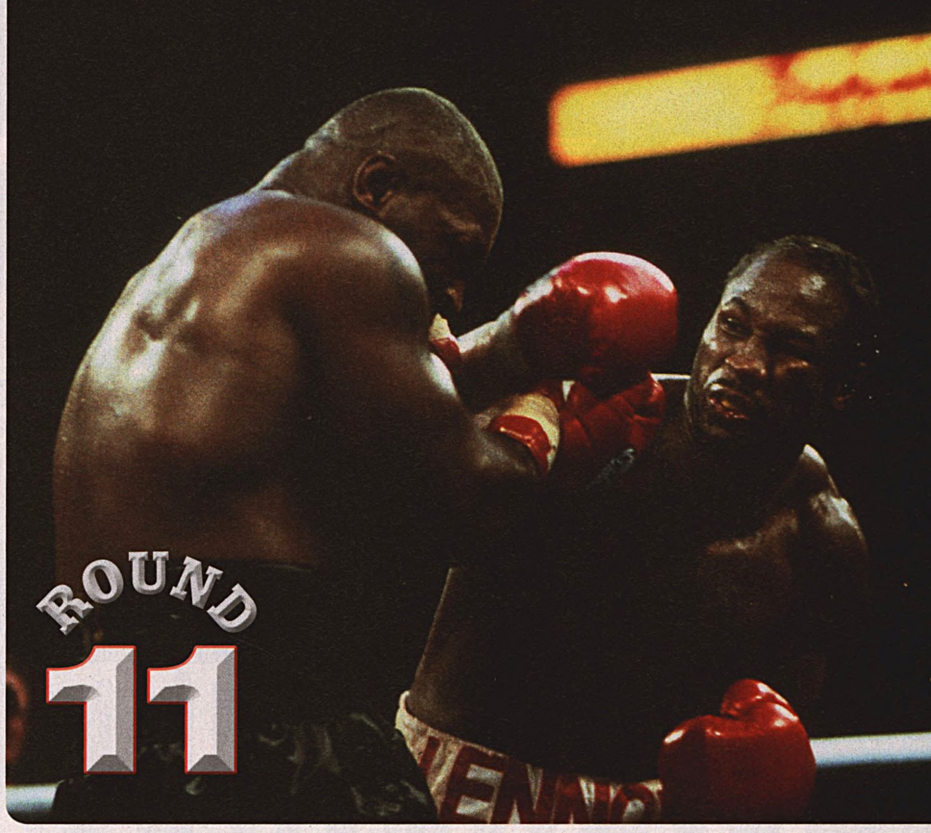
**Michael Moorer:** Moorer was OK. He was a small heavyweight and a southpaw. Not too many people wanted to fight him because of that. We came really close to fighting, but he didn't concern me. Moorer was too small and he couldn't move like I could.

**Ike Ibeabuchi:** I thought he would have been a good "opponent" for me in terms of being tough and durable. But in terms of it being a great fight or him being a good pugilist – no. I would have outclassed him and beaten him on points.

**Chris Byrd:** He came to one of my press conferences when he had a belt and said he wanted to fight me. I told him that I was a lion and he was a bird. Like Moorer, he was just too small for a heavyweight of my size.

**Riddick Bowe:** I would have knocked him out and he knows it, because I told him so. I rarely tell people they're getting knocked out, but when I do, I mean it. Bowe wasn't committed enough, and anyone who has a fridge in their bedroom has problems.

**Wladimir Klitschko:** His downfall was that he did the same thing in every fight. After a while, someone's gonna say, "You're not hitting me with that right hand," or, "You're not hitting me with that left hook." Wladimir didn't have the punch variety and, later on, it cost him when he lost Manny Steward.




It's fair to say this was my best performance, because I was so focused on avenging the loss. I just really wanted to get this guy in the ring. I had to chase Rahman down to get the rematch, and finally a judge said to him, "Did you sign (a rematch clause)?" and Rahman says yes. The judge said, "Well you have to fight him!" The rematch went absolutely to plan and the knockout was perfect. It was Christmas just after that fight, and I had an unbelievable Christmas. **LEWIS KO 4**

## ROUND 11
## MIKE TYSON
**JUNE 8, 2002. MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE:**

The fight went the way I expected. Tyson is always dangerous, but Manny Steward said that it would be my easiest fight. Manny wanted me to knock him out sooner because from the outside he could see that Tyson wasn't himself. I just wasn't taking any chances in there, because I'm a firm believer in the fact that we have 12 rounds. Manny wanted it done sooner, and I wanted to wait a little longer. **LEWIS KO 8**

## ROUND 12
## VITALI KLITSCHKO
**JUNE 21, 2003. LOS ANGELES:**

I wasn't prepared properly, but Manny and HBO pushed for that fight. I was meant to fight Kirk Johnson and then it got changed, but they said we should go ahead and fight on that date. At the end of the day, I'm a professional – a champion – and this was a 12-round fight. It doesn't matter if Klitschko was ahead after six rounds. Things change in a fight. He was cut by a punch, he was bleeding and he lost. **LEWIS TKO 6**

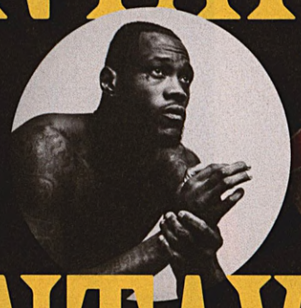
## THE DECISION:

I was in the boxing game for a long time and there had to be a get-out plan. The get-out plan was win all the belts and retire. Once I'd accomplished that – boom – it was easy. I learned from past champions. I would tell people that Muhammad Ali was my hero and people would ask, "Do you think he held on too long?" I never forgot that.

Cue rapturous cheers and applause.

*Tom Gray is Associate Editor for THE RING. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing*

# TO DEONTAY, OR NOT TO DEONTAY



## ANTHONY JOSHUA VS. JOSEPH PARKER WASN'T WHAT MOST HAD HOPED FOR … DID IT HELP OR HINDER THE CASE FOR 'AJ' VS. WILDER?

By **Gareth A Davies**

There are many tests for being the king of the division, and they get tougher. It's the reckoning time now. Anthony Joshua's fight against Joseph Parker – his third successive stadium fight in the U.K. – brought the summit of modern heavyweight history a step closer, but it was more of a chess match than a war. Going 12 rounds for the first time in his 21-fight career, the Londoner outpointed the Samoan-Kiwi to claim a third major belt, adding the WBO strap to the WBA title won against Wladimir Klitschko last year and the IBF title he was defending for the fifth time. But there was little excitement of note.

There is little doubt that Joshua is a star, a crossover athlete into the worlds of music and hipsterism, aligned already with several hugely successful brands. Joshua is a thinker in his actions. It is showing in his fights. He is obviously

**Occasionally (when the referee would allow it), Anthony Joshua and Joseph Parker attempted to trade heavy leather during their uneventful heavyweight unification bout.**

JUST AS A FIGHT WAS BEGINNING TO BREAK OUT ... IN STEPPED REFEREE GIUSEPPE QUARTARONE ... AGAIN AND AGAIN.

NICK POTTS

very tough, but he needs to find the right way from here, and Deontay Wilder is standing in a doorway marked "judgment time."

For a superfight – the unification of three of the four major world crowns between two unbeaten young heavyweights, a first in heavyweight boxing on U.K. shores – there were aspects of the Joshua-Parker showdown that disappointed. Not the efforts of the two young, still-developing heavyweights, but more the manner in which the battle was managed. The refereeing was pitiful. They danced, Joshua and Parker, and perhaps because of the refereeing, it produced more questions than it presented answers.

It went like this: Joshua and Parker less collided in Cardiff than they just went 12 rounds. They stuck to game plans for the first five. They had a cagey chess match. Then, just as a fight was beginning to break out into a trial of strength and some close-quarters combinations, in stepped referee Giuseppe Quartarone ... again and again. And again. To the point where when the two fighters were in close, they held back. From ringside, it felt like a fight contested 95 percent at a distance. It was bizarre. A disappointed – huge, remember – crowd booed and trudged out to drink more as the final bell sounded.

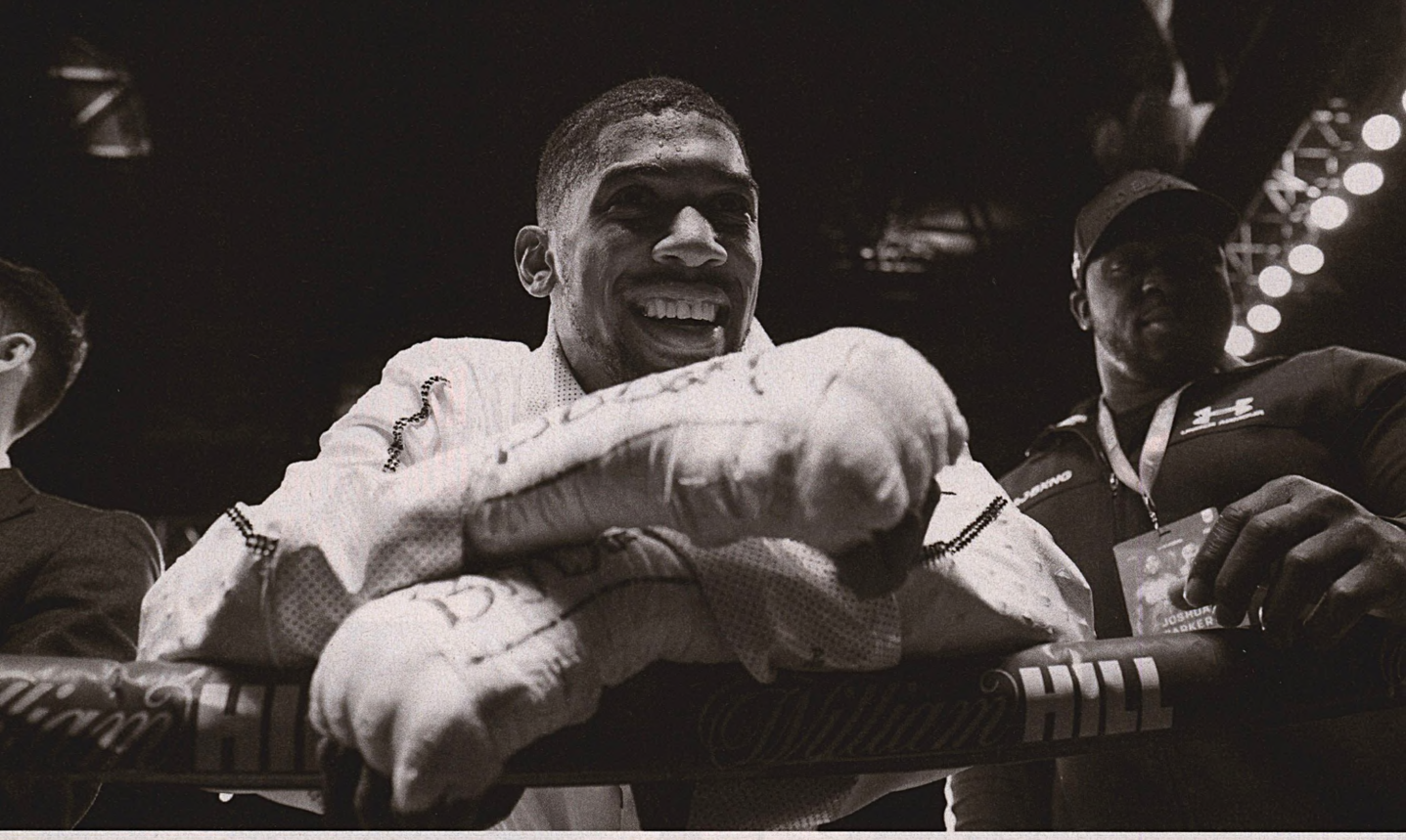
**To say that inexperienced referee Giuseppe Quartarone was over-officious is an understatement.**

But that was what the two men and 78,000 spectators were stuck with. They had to contend with Quartarone, and they did, to be fair. And in some strange way, it took their ambition to engage away. "Let them fight," several of us roared ringside, including Dillian Whyte, who'd been up and out of his seat challenging Alexander Povetkin after the Russian had knocked out David Price. (Povetkin, the WBA mandatory challenge to Joshua, is waiting in the wings.)

The style of fight probably suited Joshua, who, in the end, coasted to a victory on points. But it was unfortunate, given the scale of the spectacle. The Italian referee might have been hanged, drawn and "quartaroned" in an older version of Britain. Thankfully, times have changed. But the third man in the ring was so clearly out of his depth.

Bottom line is that both teams agreed to him, and the British Boxing Board of Control sanctioned him.

The judges scored the contest 118-110 (twice) and 119-109 for Joshua, the



**Joshua, who wanted to box a disciplined fight, was satisfied with his performance against Parker.**

RICHARD HEATHCOTE

6-foot-6-inch Briton with the six-inch reach advantage whose physicality took a toll as the rounds progressed. At the halfway mark, I had them tied, but it was Joshua's jab – and his improved fitness and stamina – that made the difference. He certainly bossed the second half.

Although both men landed heavy shots, it was only in the 11th round – ironically after one of the few clinches that the referee did not intervene – that they buckled, Parker first, then Joshua, as they threw and exchanged heavy hooks.

Parker was crestfallen afterward, knowing he had more, just not the experience to battle with Joshua.

"I felt good. I need to work harder on more things. He was a bigger, better man today, but I'll be back," said Parker, who refused to blame the referee. That was a serious learning fight there, and the 26-year-old will come back improved. But he was dignified to the last.

His plan was clearly to circle, use his jab, look for opportunities for his heavy overhand right and raid when he had an opportunity, possibly wait for Joshua to tire in the late rounds. That never happened. Joshua's body was testament to the 28-year-old's fitness regimen, plus he was 12 pounds lighter in this fight than against Carlos Takam in Cardiff in late October 2017.

Indeed, the minute advancements Joshua benefits from at his training camp at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield may be telling – certainly bringing gains at the margins. British boxing's amateur setup is based there and funded with tens of millions of pounds through government money – the rewards for continued medal successes at major games.

The facilities are state of the art. Rob McCracken, Joshua's trainer, deserves high praise in this regard, and he remains a highly measured individual who understands boxing inside out. For this Parker fight, the innovations for Joshua in camp included analyzing and improving his sleep patterns as well as monitoring his moods.

It has resulted in more time for rest and recovery. Previously, Joshua was not getting enough sleep after late-night sparring sessions. They were moved to the mornings. Also, he revealed to me in a lighter, funny moment 10 days before the contest, sex stopped on the day of a fight.

It mightn't have been the greatest spectacle, this fight, but the juggernaut that is The Joshua Show rolls on – certainly over here, if not yet over there across the pond. "Parker's a good young fighter. I'm sure I'll fight him again, but let's get Deontay Wilder over here to get an undisputed champion of the world," roared Joshua in the ring. It was a pity Wilder, though invited, wasn't there.

Joshua was neither unhappy nor elated afterward. For me, Joshua won nine or at least eight of the 12 rounds. I asked him about the lack of elation. He seemed flat after the fight. "The job's not completed yet," was his reply. Work still to do, then. True.

Joshua explained that he had corralled himself into a game-plan approach for this fight. He'd also told a group of boxing correspondents during fight week that he had been consulting with Johnathon Banks about Klitschko's employment of the jab. Perhaps it was well-studied. Seemed so during the fight. "I think that's the main thing (to box). I can definitely knock people out and hurt them, but I can definitely stick to a game plan and carry a fight through, and just take the spirit out of a champion," said Joshua of the Parker performance. "That's what I wanted to do.

"Get behind the jab – boom, boom – establish the jab. He was supposed to be quicker than me. He was trying to throw in that big overhand right hand, so just try to defend that. The main thing for me is just to feel comfortable in there. That's what I wanted to do, feel comfortable – no matter what you throw, I should have something to answer with. That's what I felt like tonight, just control this guy, and whatever he tries to do I'll have an answer for."

Joshua admitted, not for the first time, to being "a work in progress," a comment which allows him to shield his mistakes and perhaps compartmentalize boxing insecurities.

"I do like to be known as a big puncher, but at the same time I do like to be known as someone who can box and control opponents as well. I've said it before: There's not been one heavyweight champion in the world that's been known just for being a big puncher. Even Mike Tyson. His head movement, his speed, then you talk about his punching power. You have to have your all-round game and then you'll talk about your power. That's what I am trying to work on, my all-round game."

As expected, social media erupted after the bout. Promoter Lou DiBella and Wilder reacted immediately. Almost on cue. "Trolls about to jump on me, but two most dangerous heavyweights in the world are @BronzeBomber and @Tyson_Fury. AJ is a rock star, but this fight is a sedative," offered DiBella. There were elements of truth in that. Wilder was more direct: "Let's make the fight happen."

So here we are. "Let them fight," we had screamed in Cardiff. Well now we have the biggest "let them fight"... and the $100 million question was whether Joshua-Wilder, AJ and the Bronze Bomber, will meet soon to dispute heavyweight supremacy.

Who wants it, where, when and who's getting what ...? That's a serious list to solve for a fight bigger than anything in the world right now, outside of Floyd Mayweather and Conor McGregor forming a business plan.

Wilder, of course, originally employed by host broadcaster Sky, had decided not to show in Cardiff. Joshua had not wanted him in the ring afterward. Wilder took the message and opted out. It seemed like a PR faux pas, but time will tell on that one.

How soon can the fight be made, promoter Eddie Hearn was asked soon after Joshua called out Wilder. "It all depends," explained Hearn. "I will present the deal to Anthony, but it has to be the right deal. It's not just a case of 'Anthony, take the fight.' It's got to be right for everybody, and everybody is involved in that process." There will be a lot of "everybodys" in this – and a lot of processes – one suspects.

**'I CAN DEFINITELY KNOCK PEOPLE OUT AND HURT THEM, BUT I CAN DEFINITELY STICK TO A GAME PLAN...'**

The view from the fighter's corner? "We are making history time and time again, setting new trends," said Joshua. "It's not about fear or not wanting to fight someone, but it is about doing what's right for my career as well. Not just doing what people want me to do. We have to do what's right. I'm not just going to give him everything he wants to get him here. He has to do a little bit of work and sacrifice a little bit as well." There is plenty to read between the lines there. All about the deal. The percentages. The timing. The margins.

The power base with the heavyweights currently lies in Europe. With Wilder a looming threat. What we know is that Joshua remains the A-side, the stadium draw – staggeringly high attendances: Wembley 90,000, Cardiff 78,000 twice – and is clearly the vehicle around whom commercial growth is swirling. He is Hearn's golden goose, and the sport in the U.K. is riding high in his slipstream. The fight with Wilder has risks, but also reward. Should he win the showdown, it would make him even bigger.

"I'm not disappointed he didn't come, because tonight wasn't about Wilder," offered Joshua. "It was about Parker and me." He's probably right, but Wilder there would have spiced the night and the narrative.

So, those questions: Are we seeing Joshua morphing into the Klitschko behind-the-jab fighter? Probably not. Was Parker a better boxer than many had given him credit for? Probably yes. Did both men ever really get going? Probably not.

But going forward ... how much more dangerous does Wilder now look? And whither Tyson Fury? He ought to be striding back after seeing the two "semifinals" for the undisputed championship.

Perhaps we should not paint the past so rosy, or compare these fighters with those of another heavyweight era, and just enjoy the present and the future. And soonish, perhaps in the realm of early 2019, we will see an undisputed champion status fought over (probably twice) to determine a modern king of the blue riband division.

Until then, it looks like we'll witness a good dose of divisiveness and wrangling. Nothing unusual there, of course. Not where huge money is going to be invoked, over and over, before Joshua and Wilder actually step between the ropes. "Does he need me more than I need him?" asked Joshua rhetorically in front of a small group of boxing media no more than two hours after the victory over Parker. "Yes. Without being big-headed, that's 100 percent. He needs British boxing. He's bigger here than he is in the States because of us."

There we have it. That's the stance. It's unmistakable. Let boxing's promotional Game of Thrones begin ... RING

*Gareth A Davies is Boxing Correspondent of the London Telegraph.*

Undefeated welterweight champ Cecilia Braekhus is the only boxer – male or female – to currently hold all of the major sanctioning organization titles.

# STILL HUNGRY

## EVEN AS BOXING'S ONLY UNDISPUTED CHAMPION, **CECILIA BRAEKHUS** CHASES GREATER THINGS TO COME

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

No one knew who Cecilia Braekhus was on June 21, 2008, the night she made her United States debut against Nicole Woods. Back then, the 26-year-old Braekhus was 7-0, a prospect on the Sauerland Promotions roster, and fighting on the Arthur Abraham-Edison Miranda undercard at the Hard Rock in Hollywood, Florida.

As for everything else, it was a whirlwind for the Colombian-born Norwegian who had just moved to

Germany to pursue her boxing career.

"I was a very young girl and my head was all over the place," said Braekhus, who scored a near-shutout six-round decision over Woods that night. "I was just having a good time. I was doing what I loved to do, and everything was new and exciting. I wanted to see everything and be everywhere at the same time, so my thoughts were not so put together, but I was a young girl and I was enjoying life. It was a completely new world."

Ten years later, it's a completely different world for boxing's "First Lady." Now 36, Braekhus is the consensus pound-for-pound queen, the sport's only undisputed champion thanks to the five belts (IBF, IBO, WBA, WBC, WBO) she owns in the welterweight division, and in her 32 pro fights she has never tasted defeat.

"Coming to the States the first time, I don't really think I understood what I was doing; I was just living in the moment," she said. "Now I'm older, I have a plan, I have very set goals and I have a professional team that I have built around me. I'm a businesswoman, and it is two different people from the one who was in America at that time to the one now."

Add in the fact that she played a pivotal role in getting the ban on professional boxing lifted in Norway, and it's clear that the time has come for Braekhus to return to the United States, this time not as an unknown up-and-comer, but as a conqueror in search of new territory to claim.

"I think it's a big adventure for me, and a big triumph," she said of a hoped-for tour of the United States that was to begin with a May 5 bout against Kali Reis on the Gennady Golovkin-Vanes Martirosyan undercard. "The first time I fought in America, I was young, and professional boxing was very new for me. And for females, it was not at the

**Braekhus was eager to connect with boxing fans in the United States on May 5 as part of the Gennady Golovkin-Vanes Martirosyan card.**

level it is today. So the journey from the last time I was visiting America and everything that's been happening between, it's amazing to come back with five belts, 32-0, undefeated, and so much that's been accomplished. I just want to share everything with the American boxing audience, and I think it's about time."

Her accomplishments don't truly register until she reels them off effortlessly, as if doing what she's done is within reach of any prizefighter. I ask her if it's cool to be able to recite the litany of feats that have already earned her the first Christy Martin Female Fighter of the Year award from the Boxing Writers Association of America.

"I like to say it," she laughs. "But I don't say it too much, because it's very important for me to still have the mind-set of a challenger, to stay hungry and stay focused and not be the champion who just sits and waits to defend her belt. That's not my mentality. It's more like I'm attacking. I want to keep my belts, stay undefeated, and I want to take on the toughest competition and have that mentality."

Fresh from a 2017 campaign that saw her defeat Klara Svensson, Erica Farias and Mikaela Lauren, Braekhus is getting dangerously close to cleaning out the welterweight division, but there are still intriguing challenges that she believes will not just add to her legacy, but entice an American crowd that is starting to support women's boxing more substantially than it has in several years.

"Actually, there are a great many fights that can come," Braekhus said. "We have Layla McCarter in Las Vegas. We are always talking to them, and we have not quite reached that point yet, but I'm pretty sure that will happen. That is a fight I'm very excited about. I'm also excited about girls like Christina Hammer and maybe Claressa Shields. (Shields) said she wanted to meet up at a catchweight, so we'll wait and see if that could happen. There are some other American girls that could be very interesting. So right now, there's a lot happening in female boxing."

Braekhus also talks about a possible bout with UFC featherweight (145 pounds) champion Cris "Cyborg" Justino, who she spent some time with when the mixed martial artist was preparing for her bout against Holly Holm. And while that fight is a little further away from reality than the other ones she mentioned, it was the Cyborg-Holm headlining matchup at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas last December that showed Braekhus just what is possible for women's combat sports.

"It was so much fun and so amazing, and I think the best part was just how natural it is," she said of the UFC 219 card. "In professional boxing, when a girl is doing this, it's kind of a big deal and it's rare and unusual, and it shouldn't be that way. At this event with Cyborg and Holm, everything was natural and how it's supposed to be. It was like the most normal thing in the world – the best two fighters fighting each other and getting the attention they deserve and the hype they need, just at the same level as the guys. Nobody was really thinking that this was two girls fighting each other. It was just a fight everybody was looking forward to seeing."

It's ironic that Holm was one half of that UFC main event, considering that a superfight between Braekhus and "The Preacher's Daughter," a three-division world champion as a boxer, was the hottest fight to be made in the ring until negotiations for that bout fizzled. But Braekhus doesn't care for what-ifs.

"It's so funny, because Wladimir Klitschko told me one time that when one door closes, another one opens, and I think that's what's happening for both of us," she said. "What would have happened if that fight took place, I don't know. But I think we've both had remarkable careers, and now I'm not interested in fighting Holly Holm anymore. But I would love to make a Cyborg fight, and that's the funny part."

What's not funny is Braekhus' desire for big fights and bigger challenges. It's admirable, and a rarity for someone in her position. She could easily stay in Europe, where she has been headlining and selling out arena shows for years, and make a nice living fighting mandatory after mandatory. But that's not enough for her. Not by a longshot.

"I think every fighter just wants to be tested sometime to the point where they have to go to reach somewhere they haven't been and see what's inside them and what can be brought to life," she said. "And the only way you can do that is with an opponent who can push you this far. I haven't found that opponent yet, and I would love to have that. I think that's something that I want to happen and what needs to happen. And until that happens, I will continue to fight the best girls and look for adventures, like coming to America, which will be a big adventure for me."

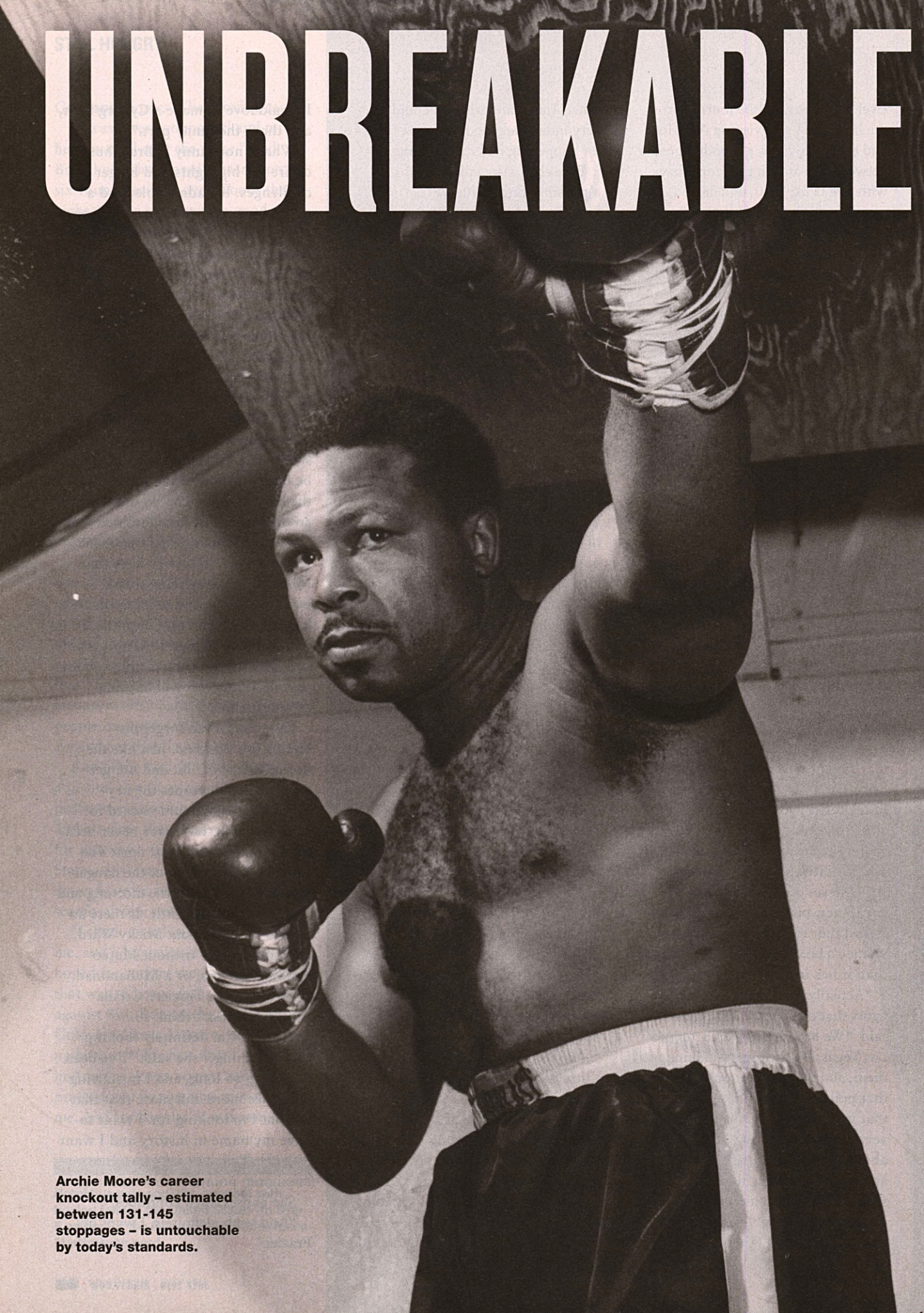
Fight fans often forget that boxing is a business. Just like the in-ring adage of "hit and not get hit," outside the ropes the key for many is maximum reward for minimum risk. But that's never been the attitude of the great ones. The special fighters seek out the danger that gets them up in the morning and even scares them a little. Is there an Arturo Gatti without Micky Ward, an Erik Morales without Marco Antonio Barrera, or a Muhammad Ali without Joe Frazier? Cecilia Braekhus doesn't think so.

"I think I'm definitely looking for something," she said. "I've been in boxing so long, and I'm starting to realize more and more that that is what I'm looking for. I want to have my name in history and I want to be challenged to the absolute maximum point."

She pauses, then continues.

"And yeah, definitely, I want my Frazier." RING

# UNBREAKABLE



**Archie Moore's career knockout tally – estimated between 131-145 stoppages – is untouchable by today's standards.**

# BEHIND THE PROMOTIONAL HYPE ABOUT 'SETTING RECORDS,' THERE ARE SOME NUMBERS THAT WILL NEVER BE TOUCHED BY FUTURE FIGHTERS

By **Don Stradley**

**If ever a pair of boxing records** should leave us all in a state of open-mouthed awe, it would have to be the two set by Len Wickwar, a little-known British lightweight who fought during the years prior to World War II. There aren't many big names on his resume – he once lost by disqualification to former champion Jackie "Kid" Berg, "The Whitechapel Whirlwind" – but the reason he's worth mentioning has nothing to do with the quality of his opponents and everything to do with the sheer quantity. By the time Wickwar's 19-year career wrapped up, he had established two records that will never be touched, that of total wins – 340 – and total fights – 470 (including one no-contest). And those are just the ones we know about. Some researchers claim the numbers are actually higher. Frankly, when a man fights two or three times per week, it's tough to keep track.

Though Wickwar was incomprehensibly busy, it wasn't unusual for British fighters of his day to work such backbreaking schedules. One of Wickwar's opponents, Billy Bird, had more than 350 professional fights. Another, "Tiger" Bert Ison, had more than 330 pro bouts (and lost a heartbreaking 179 of them). The prodigious numbers put up by these fighters were the result of simple economics: They weren't making big paydays, so they had to fight constantly. For an example of how times have changed for fighters, consider Bernard Hopkins fighting his last bout at age 51. Hopkins' longevity was impressive, not only because he'd set the record for title defenses at middleweight, but also because he was still in the title picture at 49. Yet his career total of 67 bouts (which include two no-contests) is barely a sneeze when one looks at the records of certain old-timers. The truth is that Hopkins lasted so long because he fought when top fighters could take a year or two off between bouts, a luxury unimagined by men like Wickwar.

**Len Wickwar's career fight total was mind-boggling even for the Golden Era of the sport.**

Born in Leicester, England, in 1911, Wickwar began fighting for money as a teenage flyweight. Most of his early bouts were held in his hometown, though he'd eventually fight throughout the United Kingdom. He occasionally fought in large venues, but the majority of his bouts took place in makeshift rings set up on rugby pitches or in skating rinks. The highlight of Wickwar's career may have come in 1937 at King's Hall in Derby. That was when, in his 384th bout, he stopped Fred Naylor in 10 rounds for the British Boxing Board of Control's Midlands Area welterweight title. It was a small regional distinction, but one that was probably quite meaningful to Wickwar.

So why isn't Wickwar revered in boxing the way Cy Young, the all-time win leader, is hailed in baseball? Why does his name register only with the monkish types who stumble about with a lantern in boxing's darkest, dustiest archives? There are many reasons, starting with the fact that most boxing fans, and even those who cover boxing, tend to dismiss history and focus on what's directly in front of them. Boxing is a product to be sold, like soft drinks or air fresheners. A broadcaster wouldn't interrupt a discussion of some young fighter who just won his 30th bout by saying, "He's still 310 behind Len Wickwar." It wouldn't be the best way to sell viewers on the new talent.

The main reason that Wickwar isn't a household name is due to the murky, complicated nature of boxing's past. Prior to the 1930s – which is roughly when the sport began to resemble what we see today – boxing was very different, to where it must seem antediluvian to modern eyes. Gloves were smaller, fights were longer and weight classes were different, as were many of the rules. Boxing was illegal in many states, yet bouts took place everywhere. How to explain this to current fans watching a fight on their phone? This ever-winding and confusing history is likely what keeps people from knowing about Wickwar and many other fighters who accomplished extraordinary feats.

For instance, can fans brought up on 12-round bouts fathom the 1893 contest between Andy Bowen and "Texas" Jack Burke that lasted 110 rounds? Fighting in New Orleans for

something billed as "the lightweight championship of the South," Bowen and Burke fought for more than seven hours before referee John Duffy, probably sick of being there, finally called the fight off. Though nothing else about the Bowen-Burke fight makes it particularly memorable, its incredible length puts it forever in the record book as boxing's longest gloved contest. But the sheer unreachability of 110 rounds could be what prevents it from being better known. When an intriguing record does come up, it's usually because it is on the verge of being smashed.

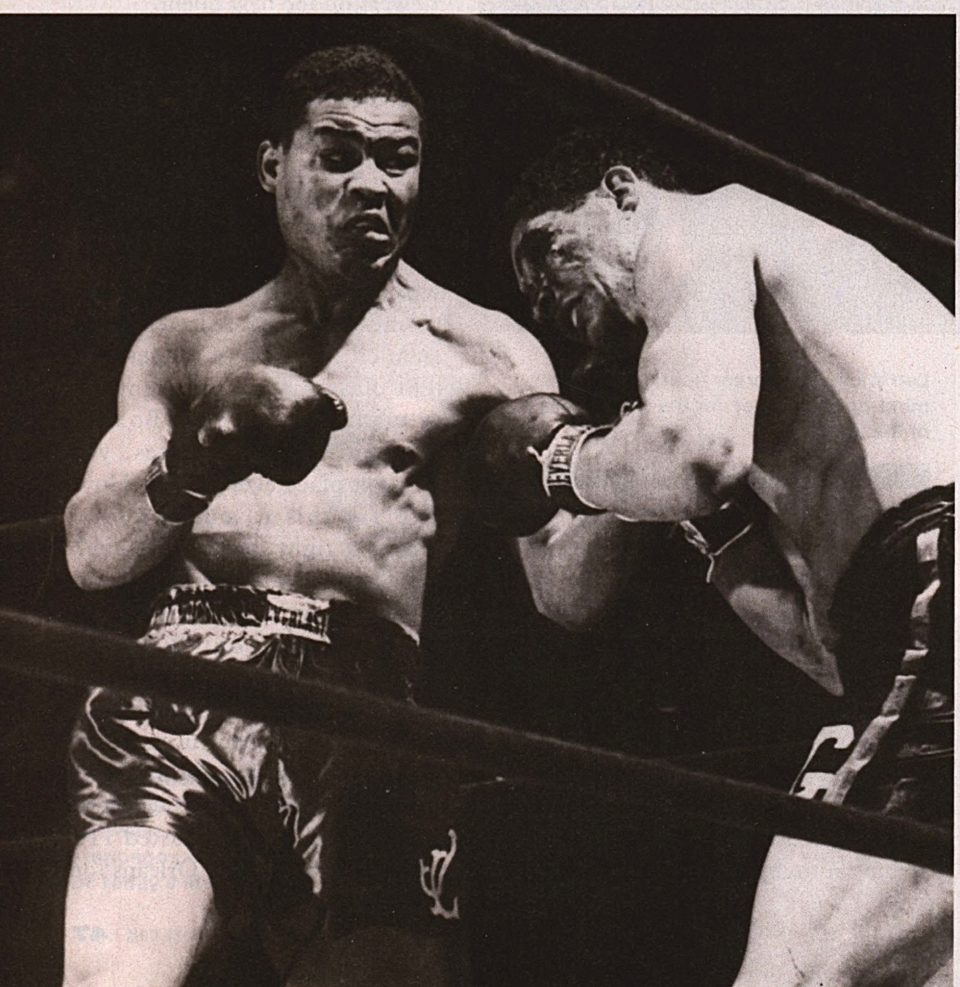
A recent example happened last year when Floyd Mayweather Jr. ran his record to 50-0, which brought Rocky Marciano's undefeated streak of 49 into the limelight. What's amusing, though, is that Mayweather's 50-0 isn't especially impressive – not when many other fighters enjoyed much longer unbeaten streaks at the start of or during their careers, including Sugar Ray Robinson, Pedro Carrasco, and Nino Benvenuti (Julio Cesar Chavez is another, though an overturned DQ loss in 1981 puts the final tally in question). Granted, retiring unbeaten is impressive and rare, but realizing Willie Pep won his first 62 bouts in a row, lost once, then went unbeaten for another 73 fights, puts Mayweather and "The Rock" into a different perspective.

Wladimir Klitschko brought Joe Louis' name back into the conversation when he started to approach Louis' record of 25 title defenses at heavyweight, a number that has stood since 1948 (some put the record at 26, counting Louis' 1944 exhibition bout with Johnny Davis that was recognized as a title tiff in New York). Of course, Klitschko's wins were spread over two title reigns, while Louis' were consecutive, but Klitschko made it interesting. In fact, if you combine Klitschko's two reigns, he actually surpassed Louis' record of 11 years and eight months at the top. And Klitschko wasn't the first to come close. Back in the 1980s, Larry Holmes reached 20 defenses and had the pundits wondering if he'd be the one to break Louis' total. Again, there's nothing to make a record known like the possibility of someone breaking it.

This was even true in 1958, when Archie Moore passed Young Stribling to become the all-time knockout leader. A good amount of press coverage focused on Moore closing in on Stribling's total – not quite on par, but similar to when a baseball player is on the verge of breaking a record. When the Associated Press told Moore he was tied with Stribling at 126 KOs, "The Old Mongoose" was humble at first, though he soon boasted in a syndicated column that he already owned the record, since he'd scored many knockouts that were never documented. "I'm not going to put up a squawk about it," he wrote. "I want to go by the book."

Moore finally passed Stribling's number in the most memorable bout of his career, his incredible stoppage of Yvon Durelle in Montreal. Durelle almost ruined Moore's chances when he dropped Moore three times in the first round and once again in the fifth. Moore, already in his 40s and past his best, rallied to stop Durelle and become the new knockout king at :40 of the 11th.

Depending on whose statistics you're reading, Moore's KO total is somewhere between 131 and 145. For that matter, Stribling's total is also uncertain (sources range from 125 to 129). Still, the safety of Moore's feat is obvious; if fighters are now retiring after 60 or 70 fights, they certainly won't score 145 knockouts. Like Wickwar, Moore fought often because he needed the money. In the process, he knocked a lot of opponents cold. But if the records set by Moore and Wickwar were part and parcel of having long careers, Henry



**Joe Louis' record of 25 consecutive title defenses remains the standard for all weight classes.**

Armstrong made history because his manager suggested it would be good for business.

Armstrong was already a phenomenon in 1937, a dynamo that had attracted financial backing from two of the most famous entertainers of the time, singer Al Jolson and actor George Raft. Yet there was concern in Armstrong's camp that a featherweight like him would never be as popular as heavyweight champion Joe Louis. Armstrong's manager Eddie Mead came up with the idea that three small titles might be the equivalent of the heavyweight title, so it was decided that Armstrong would try to win three championships at once, a feat that had never been attempted before. In 1970, Armstrong told author Peter Heller that Jolson, Raft and Meade "came up with the idea that I had to become super-popular, colossal. They had these words in Hollywood – colossal, stupendous, all like that." Armstrong liked the idea of winning three titles. How else could a 126-pound guy become colossal?

In a matter of 10 months, Armstrong scored a sixth-round KO of Petey Sarron for the featherweight title, jumped up to welterweight to take Barney Ross' crown by 15-round unanimous decision, and then dropped to lightweight to beat Lou Ambers by split decision. The win over Ambers was the hardest-earned, with United Press reporter Henry McLemore noting at the fight's end, "The floor of the ring resembled a giant butcher's apron."

Strangely, the third title didn't have the immediate effect of making Armstrong a star on par with Louis. Fans jeered Armstrong as he left the ring, while the gallant Ambers soaked in the cheers. There was also griping that Armstrong's camp and promoter Mike Jacobs were monopolizing the titles; soon there were rules against challenging for multiple titles at once. Undoubtedly, though, Armstrong had accomplished a Herculean task that would never be matched. After relinquishing the featherweight belt because it was too difficult to make weight, and losing the lightweight title back to Ambers, Armstrong focused on being the welterweight champion. He set another record, by the way, making 19 defenses in that division.

Since Armstrong's era, many fighters have won titles in three divisions, though none would ever claim all three at once. With the addition of many new weight classes since the 1970s, it's even been possible for fighters to win in five, six, or seven divisions (eight for Manny Pacquiao when you count the RING/lineal title). But when you consider that Armstrong fought at a time when there were no "junior" weight classes and only one titleholder per class, his achievement becomes all the more mind-boggling. Add to this the fact that Sarron, Ross and Ambers were future Hall of Famers, and it's no wonder that Armstrong is usually ranked as one of the top fighters of all time. He's often rated above Louis, an irony that would certainly please Eddie Mead.

**Boxing will never witness another prizefighter like Henry Armstrong.**

The records being made today are all about money. New standards are being regularly set for pay-per-view buys, and there has been an incredible rise in fighters' paychecks. Granted, much of this era's largesse is due to blitzkrieg marketing and inflated prices, and the so-called megabouts are often disappointing. Still, even some fighters who aren't in the upper echelon of moneymakers are earning six figures. In that regard, all of the old-timers mentioned here would've preferred this era to their own. It's nice to claim a record that will stand forever, but even dear old Len Wickwar would've enjoyed fighting less often and putting a few more dollars in the bank. RING

# FIGHT ROUNDUP

Alexander Povetkin (standing) and David Price engaged in an exciting heavyweight shootout on the Joshua-Parker undercard on March 31, but the brutal ending was never in doubt.

BY **BRIAN HARTY**

## RECENT ACTION AND FUTURE SIGNIFICANCE

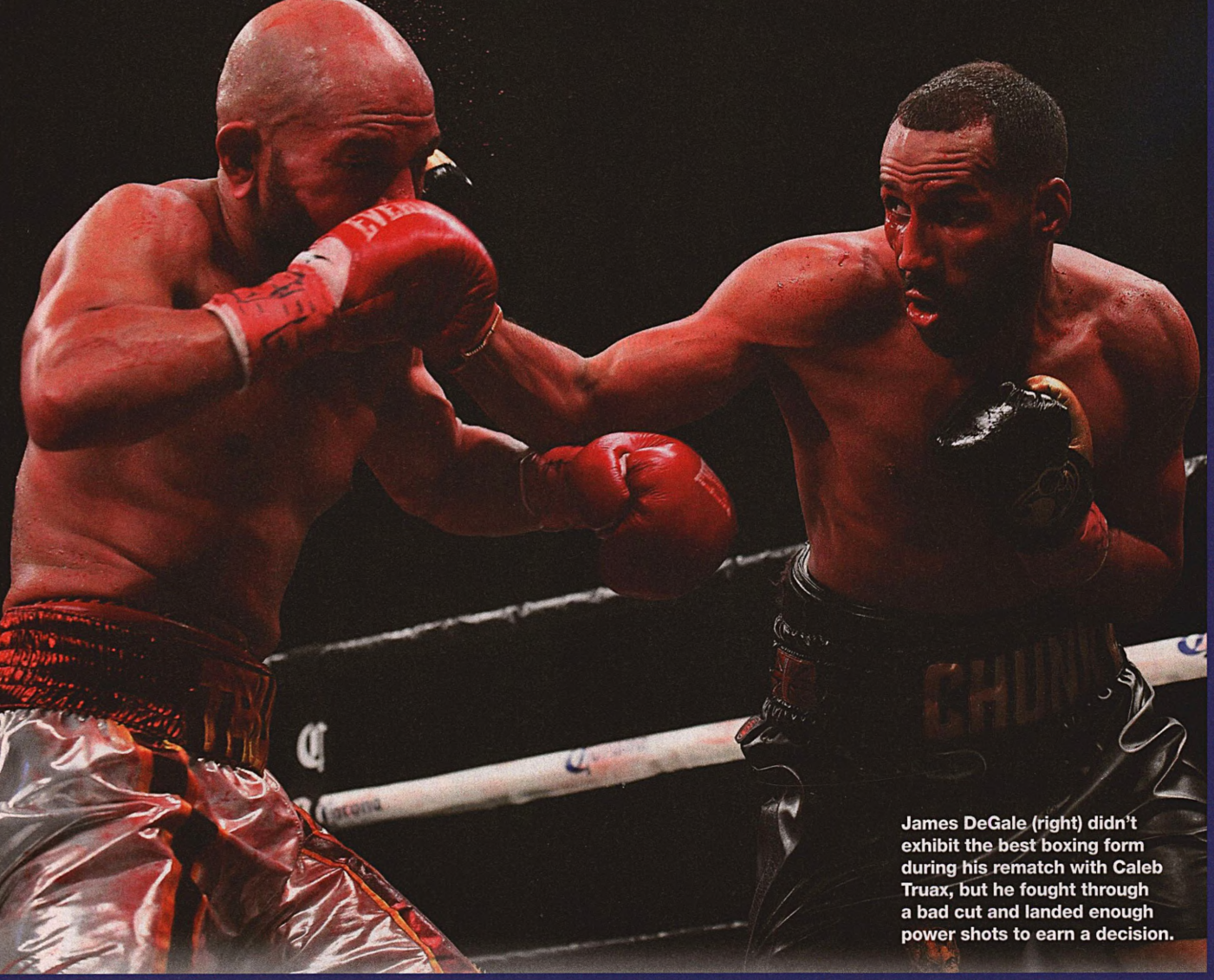
### ALEXANDER POVETKIN KO 5 DAVID PRICE

March 31, Cardiff, Wales

**Until he was double-exposed** by a pair of knockouts against Tony Thompson in 2013, David Price was considered a legit target in Britain's search for "the next big thing." Key to that theory was that, at 6-foot-8, he had the size deemed necessary to hang with modern heavyweights.

Alexander Povetkin, on the other hand, is forever cursed to be dismissed by casual eyes that see only a lack of size (6-foot-2) and muscle definition (doomed also to be called a cheater, but that's another story). It's not that he doesn't look tough; he does, just sort of like a tough Russian cherub. But what he lacks in modern appearance he makes up for in versatility, and that's particularly clear against a fighter like Price whose one meaningful dimension is his height.

During their clash on the undercard of Anthony Joshua-Joseph Parker at Principality Stadium, Povetkin was stabbed a few times by Price's quick jab, but otherwise had little trouble slipping his punches or nimbly lunging in to land bodyshots and overhand rights on the taller man. Around the midway point of Round 3, Povetkin followed a right to the body with a left hook that caught Price flush on the skull and dropped him on his back. The Brit regained the point with just a few seconds remaining in the round, though, landing a surprising left hook that sent Povetkin staggering backward for balance until he hit the ropes, which



James DeGale (right) didn't exhibit the best boxing form during his rematch with Caleb Truax, but he fought through a bad cut and landed enough power shots to earn a decision.

was enough to draw a count from the ref. Neither man seemed hurt by the knockdowns.

The injury-free ride ended in Round 5, however. This time, Povetkin started his combo with a left hook to the body and followed with an almost simultaneous right upstairs. Price took a step backward and dropped his hands completely; clearly he'd been stunned by the punch, but it was a strange sight, almost like he'd just realized he forgot to turn off the stove at home. Any punch would've finished the job at that point. Povetkin chose the trusty left hook, and all that remained was for the paramedics to ease Price back to his feet.

For the Olympic bronze medalist (2008) it was another disappointing blow to a career that once had such high hopes behind it. For Povetkin (gold, 2004), it was time again for the 38-year-old – now the mandatory challenger for Anthony Joshua's WBA title – to take up his position as the "little guy" nobody wants to fight.

## JAMES DEGALE UD 12 CALEB TRUAX

April 7, Las Vegas

**There were highlights, but you** might want to opt for the two-minute edited-down version if you plan on watching this fight for the first time. Or, if you enjoy the sight of blood and don't care about the context … by all means, sicko, settle in for the full 12.

Truax was looking to prove that his win over DeGale in December – which, along with Ali-Cotto and Horn-Pacquiao, was certainly among the top three upsets of 2017 – wasn't just a case of him on his best night and DeGale on his worst. DeGale went a step further and promised he'd retire if he didn't win the sequel. He did win, but it was more of a demolition derby than a boxing match.

A collision of heads opened up a cut over DeGale's right eye in Round 3, and the nasty sight got nastier as further bone-on-bone incidents and excessive grappling liberated erythrocytes by the billions. It was ugly but competitive, though probably not in a way that helped either man's case. Truax lost, however closely (scores were 114-113, 114-113 and a wacky 117-110), so the thrill is now gone from his upset. DeGale won, but he still struggled, so he didn't regain any of his pre-upset luster, even if he did take back his super middleweight title. If anything, the rematch probably produced some of the best

post-fight conversation of all time – the boxers shared an ambulance to the hospital.

## JARRETT HURD SD 12 ERISLANDY LARA

**April 7, Las Vegas**

**First of all ... Jarrett Hurd** is huge. Lara must have some serious bone density to be in the same weight class as that. Hurd is also relentless, and in accordance with boxing law No. 1, that style made a fight. An exciting one! Not something usually linked to Mr. Lara, whose name evokes admiration but whose fight dates evoke plans to be somewhere else. Against Hurd he had no choice other than to be an action fighter for a night, however. Even tough nuts like Lara can't survive getting run over by a bulldozer.

The great thing about Lara, though, is that unlike another superb Cuban boxer who shall remain anonymous (because nobody can agree on how to pronounce his name anyway), he showed that he can adapt and thrive inside the firestorm. He took all the counterpunching and sharpshooting he uses to nullify less imposing opponents and brought it into the pocket where it became brawling too subtle for the naked eye. Lara is a really good fighter. It's just that Hurd is huge and relentless. And he's not a bad puncher himself – a little sloppy compared to Lara, but effective with his bodyshots, uppercuts and clubbing hooks. And he throws so many that it doesn't take a high success rate to do damage.

A disappointed Lara would say after the scorecards were read that one punch doesn't decide a fight. He couldn't have been more right and wrong at the same time – and couldn't have benefited less from either viewpoint. It was certainly not one punch that sapped Lara to the point of being vulnerable in Round 12; it was Hurd's pressure and body-wide beating that had created that fatigue – not to mention the gash that was bleeding into Lara's right eye. And yet it was *precisely* one punch that won the fight when a short left hook put Lara on the canvas with less than half a round to go. Without the point deduction for the knockdown, the result – scores of 114-113 for Lara and 114-113 twice for Hurd – would've been a majority draw.

Whatever the scores, it was an admirable performance from both corners and the winner unified two junior middleweight belts. A third belt's owner, Jermell Charlo, watched from ringside and presumptuously savored the idea of fighting Hurd after taking care of Austin Trout in June. The winner of that fight would also become the RING champion.

**Erislandy Lara (right) arguably fought the best fight of his near-10-year pro career against Jarrett Hurd, but it was not enough to overcome the younger man's size, pressure and volume punching.**

SAM WASSON

## CRISTOFER ROSALES TKO 9 DAIGO HIGA

April 15, Yokohama, Japan

**Daigo Higa was a great addition** to the flyweight division – a power-puncher (15 fights, 15 wins, 15 knockouts), a legend in his corner (Yoko Gushiken), a little crazy in the eyes – and then he had a very, very bad weekend. First he came in two pounds overweight and lost his title on the spot. Then he ran into a wickedly determined underdog.

Higa looked like a corpse at the weigh-in and didn't look himself during the fight – his timing wasn't great, his defense more porous than usual – but let that take nothing away from Cristofer Rosales. The main thing about Higa's punches is that they were landing often enough but having no effect on the Nicaraguan, who meanwhile was routinely thudding at Higa's body, nailing him with right crosses and popping his head up with uppercuts. It wasn't long before the Japanese fighter was spending more time scrambling around the fringe of Rosales' range looking for a safe way in.

The space between Rosales' single hard punches shrank until he was stringing three or four of them together into damaging combinations while Higa, his face swelling, searched in vain for any strategy that would make a difference. He had a promising rally in Round 7, but the combat only seemed to energize Rosales, who came out shuffling his feet and hacking murderously at his opponent's midsection in the ninth. The ending was strange, as corners usually intervene to save their fighters from a hailstorm in progress and this came at a calm point in the round, but Higa's team didn't like what they were seeing and decided to pull the plug.

It was understandably devastating for the former titleholder and his comeback route is uncertain given the failure to make weight, but he has plenty of time at 22 years old. For Rosales, just one year Higa's senior and three fights removed from a wide decision loss to Andrew Selby, the other titles are now within his reach – especially with Donnie Nietes' recently vacated belt up for grabs.

**The skyrocketing career of Daigo Higa (left) has been temporarily stalled by a failure to make weight and a subsequent loss to Cristofer Rosales.**

NAOKI FUKUDA

Ryota Murata's committed body attack was an integral part of his eighth-round stoppage of Emanuele Blandamura.

## RYOTA MURATA TKO 8 EMANUELE BLANDAMURA

**April 15, Yokohama, Japan**

**After the shock of Rosales-**Higa, the audience at the Yokohama Arena was probably looking for some reassurance that the universe wasn't completely broken, and Murata's non-upset stoppage of Blandamura did the trick. It was a gradual beatdown, basically, Blandamura developing a severe case of rope-rash on his back as Murata pressured him into retreat with powerful right hands. Blandamura would escape sideways, Murata would cut him into a corner and unload some right hands on his head, and this pattern repeated until the Italian succumbed and dropped to all fours in Round 8.

Probably happiest of all was Bob Arum, who might finally be seeing one of the long-nurtured jewels of his crown starting to shine. Murata, a 2012 Olympic gold medalist who turned pro in 2013, came to the promoter as a popular prospect with crossover potential, being a middleweight, but had failed to really set hearts aflame with his early performances. Perhaps Murata himself heard the sound of crumbling potential when he lost a decision (a robbery, to be fair) to Hassan N'Dam in May 2017, because he's been fighting with a bit more purpose since then. 30 million Japanese fans reportedly watched the Murata-N'Dam rematch, in which Murata emphatically avenged the loss by becoming the first person to stop the resilient Cameroonian. And with the Blandamura victory likewise being televised on ESPN2, American audiences are getting to know another star who swims in the same waters as Gennady Golovkin and Canelo Alvarez.

# WORLD BEAT

Remarkably, this monster right cross landed by Dillian Whyte wasn't the punch that ended the fight against Lucas Browne.

## U.K.

**BY GARETH A DAVIES**

**Dillian Whyte was once just** a nuisance, the fall guy in the heavyweight division. Late starter, but now bright burner. Or at the very least, in position as a stand-in challenger to the heavyweight titles. The showdown between Londoner Whyte and the unbeaten Australian Lucas Browne at The O2 in the U.K. capital was a much vaunted aperitif to the Big Show – Anthony Joshua and Joe Parker the following week – but its meaning was so much deeper than just bragging rights between two very large men who had a clear and very public dislike for each other.

The ever-improving Whyte got the result – and even more so, the statement – he wanted with a brutal left-hook knockout in the sixth round. It was a mature performance in which he combined patience, punch variety and finishing instinct for the first time. Of course he also maintained his position as the No. 1 challenger to the WBC's incumbent titleholder, Deontay Wilder. That in itself, indeed, is a very useful pawn in the chess game ongoing between promoter Eddie Hearn and Wilder's negotiating team of Shelly Finkel and Al Haymon.

Anyway, although Browne labored in this fight, that final punch and the cultured showing sent a lucid signal that Whyte has bad ambitions and badder intentions in this heavyweight landscape. Most would argue that the Brixton fighter sits on a rung below Joshua and Wilder with a group of other challengers, but he placed himself in a position for glory and paydays. As promoter Hearn said afterward: "This was the most important (fight) in the division outside of the world heavyweight championships. There are two fights I want Dillian to have: against Anthony Joshua and WBC champion Deontay Wilder." We'll see. Incidentally, Whyte and Joshua have already fought, in a nice brawl back in 2015.

What will stay long in the memory is the end of Browne on March 24. It was not pretty. But it was a pretty fine showing from Whyte, who the following week was in a radio commentary position alongside your correspondent working the Joshua-Joseph Parker fight. When David Price was knocked out by Alexander Povetkin, Whyte was out of his commentary chair and straight to ringside to challenge the Russian. Whyte means business ... all the time.

★★★

**Boxing's often complicated** narrative has been the catalyst for stirring movies. Now we can add another to that list ...

Paddy Considine is a brilliant actor and director. Huge boxing fan, too. A couple of years back he was ejected from the media seats at a boxing event in the U.K., drunk and arguing with media men about something or other. It was weirdly out of character. *Journeyman*, 10 years in the making, is about a boxer's struggle for recovery, a battle to rebuild his own masculinity after a brain injury and surgery. There are cameos from legendary Sheffield trainer Brendan Ingle and several others from the boxing world as it explores, in great detail, the search for glory in boxing and the recovery from its worst scenarios. Considine

creates a moving, deep spectacle. His co-star in the movie, Jodie Whittaker – the new Dr. Who of BBC fame – who plays the mother of his child, is also brilliant. This is a boxing film with a difference; it looks for no scapegoats, but looks at the reality of life gone wrong through a brain injury. *Journeyman*, 2017 boxing movie, out now.

★★★

**Robin Deakin – self-described** as "Britain's worst boxer" – hung up his gloves a few weeks ago after a 55-fight career. 53 of those were losses. The junior welterweight may not have been as much of a chump as the likes of Reggie Strickland with 276 defeats, or Birmingham brawler Peter Buckley – 256 defeats from 300 contests – but the lively character had disadvantages which they did not have ...

"It's not too bad a record for a kid who was born with a disability in both feet who couldn't walk until he was six," the 31-year-old told me of his remarkable story and 11-year career in which he fought British champions – and a world titleholder – and would often fight at the drop of a hat.

Deakin left school at 14 to learn his trade as a butcher, a job he will now go into full-time with Butcher & Edmonds in Kennington, London. His story is astonishing, and one he hopes to tell on a reality-television series someday.

"I was born with club feet – both feet – the left foot is worse," he explained. "I had so many operations, I was rarely in school because I was in and out of hospital as a kid. I always wanted to be known, to be respected."

He reckons he had more than 20 surgeries – so many that he lost count.

"I only took up boxing to build my confidence, because I was bullied as a kid because of my disability, and to strengthen my legs. I wasn't a bad amateur, either," he explained to me, revealing that it gave him a release, a reason. "I had 76 amateur fights and I won 40 of them, getting to the semifinals of the ABAs. The disability did hold me back, but I'm a lot better than my record says. I might have had all those losses, but I always gave as good as I got."

He boxed the best in Britain as they were coming up "... and I troubled a lot of decent fighters," he was quick to point out. "I can whack, and I put a few fighters on their asses. I fought Anthony Crolla, who went on to become a world champion. The truth is, journeymen are expected to lose. We are put in there to fight the up-and-coming guys, to give them experience, and we are not given the respect we deserve."

As he reflected on his eventful, though not illustrious career, Deakin, who has relocated to live with girlfriend Sinead, was proud to say that he did "something people said I couldn't because of my disability."

"I was never a world champion, but if I had had one wish it would have been to have normal legs for one day, just to prove how I could dance in the ring ..."

The burning question is whether Deakin will be able to stay away. "Like Floyd Mayweather, you never know. I might come back," he added. "The fights I would come back for are the two Conors, Conor Benn and Conor McGregor. Anyway, McGregor has a boxing record of 0-1, and I retire with a better record than him."

## PHILIPPINES

**BY RYAN SONGALIA**

**Whether or not Manny Pacquiao** and Freddie Roach continue working together, it's obvious that they aren't communicating clearly. The same day that a Pacquiao team member released a statement announcing that assistant trainers Buboy Fernandez and Nonoy Neri would run the fighter's corner for his July 15 bout against Lucas Matthysse, Roach released his own statement saying he was "hurt that he didn't contact me

**When Manny Pacquaio takes on Lucas Matthysse in July, he'll do it without longtime trainer Freddie Roach in his corner.**

personally about his decision ... but the great times we enjoyed together far outweigh that."

Those great times include winning world titles in several weight classes and Pacquiao being named Fighter of the Decade for the 2000s by the Boxing Writers Association of America. Roach has worked the corner in all of Pacquiao's fights since 2001, save for the Jorge Solis fight in 2005.

Days later, Pacquiao released a statement through his Facebook page denying that the initial statement had come from him, and that he hadn't made up his mind about who will train him for the fight in Malaysia.

"Contrary to statements which I personally did not make that are circulating in the media, I have not made my final decision who will be my head trainer for my July 14 fight with Matthysse," said Pacquiao. "When the decision is made, Freddie will be the first one to be informed and then I will advise the media."

The optics of splitting with your coach of 16 years are bad, but how would a change at age 38 impact Pacquiao? One person who has been in Roach's shoes is Rick Staheli, the Philippine-based American trainer who guided Pacquiao to his first title win in 1998. Staheli, who started working with Pacquiao in 1997 before being pushed out by Pacquiao's former manager, Rod Nazario, in early 1999, said that promoting Fernandez to chief second may deprive the fighter of advice from one of the sport's most celebrated gurus, but that it wouldn't hurt to have fewer voices in the corner.

"I actually don't agree with the way they handle Manny on fight night," said Staheli. "If you ever listen to the corner, Freddie says stuff and Buboy says stuff. But Buboy's not translating what Freddie is saying. They're saying two different things.

"I think with Manny, he's a veteran and he's pretty much got his camp down."

**Three-division titleholder Donnie Nietes has officially moved to the junior bantamweight division.**

★★★

**"To go up in weight is never** easy but this is my dream, to become a four-division world champion and to fight all the big names at super flyweight."

With those words, Donnie Nietes vacated the IBF flyweight title and announced his entrance into one of the sport's most competitive divisions. Like an indie band with four albums out before making it to mainstream radio play, Nietes is only now breaking out of his niche status at age 35, having always been in the wrong division at the wrong time to make big fights.

The WBO installed him as the No. 1 contender for the 115-pound title Naoya Inoue left behind, and Nietes' promoter, Michael Aldeguer, is certain they'll be fighting for the vacant belt next. But who will they face? There's a very real possibility that Nietes could face his Filipino countryman Aston Palicte (24-2, 20 KOs), the hard-hitting No. 2 contender from Nietes' home province, Negros Occidental.

Jerwin Ancajas' defense of the IBF junior bantamweight title against Jonas Sultan on May 26 is already set to be the first all-Filipino world-title fight since 1925, but it looks like we may not have to wait too long for the one after that.

★★★

**Lightweight prospect Romero** Duno (16-1, 14 KOs) will get a chance to show how much he has progressed under trainer Rodel Mayol when he headlines an ESPN2 card May 17 against Gilberto Gonzalez in Indio, California.

Gonzalez (26-4, 22 KOs) showed he had power in his last fight in April 2017 when he dropped Mercito Gesta in a decision loss. Though Duno is still a work in progress, he hopes to get a crack at the WBC lightweight title currently held by Mikey Garcia within the year.

"If they gave me that fight, I'll make sure to them that I fight to the death to get that belt," said Duno, who earned a deal with Golden Boy after his upset second-round KO of Christian Gonzalez in March 2017.

★★★

**And in the most memorable** upset by a Filipino boxer this past month, Alvin Lagumbay and Keita Obara hit the canvas simultaneously in the second round of their fight on April 12 in Tokyo after trading left hooks. Lagumbay didn't appear seriously hurt, but Obara was out on his feet when he rose. Obara (19-3-1, 17 KOs) had been rated in the top 10 by two sanctioning organizations while Lagumbay (10-2, 9 KOs), of San Fernando, Bukidnon, Philippines, was virtually unknown. An option for a rematch likely means Lagumbay will have to prove he can do it again, but this time he'll make more money trying.

## JAPAN

**BY NICK SKOK**

**Naoya Inoue knows he has a** tall order ahead of him when he takes on Jamie McDonnell in his

bantamweight debut on May 25, which is why the 5-foot-5 phenom (No. 7 in the RING pound-for-pound rankings) has geared his training toward chopping down the 5-foot-10 Englishman.

Inside the Ohashi Gym, four floors above the Yokohama streets, Inoue's preparation is underway, and among his sparring partners is Can Xu, a 5-foot-9 junior lightweight fringe contender from China who shares the "Monster" nickname with the Japanese star.

McDonnell (29-2-1, 13 KOs), a veteran bantamweight contender who holds the WBA "regular" belt, which is not recognized by THE RING, will travel to Tokyo to take on Inoue (15-0, 13 KOs) in a highly anticipated clash. Hideyuki Ohashi, gym president and Inoue's promoter, informed THE RING that the World Boxing Super Series has contacted him about Inoue joining their tournament should his fighter come away victorious.

★★★

**Daigo Higa became the first** Japanese boxer in history to lose a major world title on the scales when he missed the 112-pound flyweight limit and was stripped of his WBC belt ahead of his April 15 defense against Cristofer Rosales. The dehydrated Higa (15-1, 15 KOs) was finished off by Rosales (27-3, 18 KOs) in Round 9 after Higa's corner told the referee to halt the bout.

Rewind to last May. Higa, only nine days before he would go on to win the vacant title, was nearly hospitalized from a panic attack. The stress of having to lose weight was getting the best of the 22-year-old body-banger even last year.

However, Higa's weight struggles were masked by successful defenses in October and February, as well as a 15-bout KO streak. He was only one stoppage victory away from breaking the all-time Japanese KO-streak record set by former

**The weight struggles of Daigo Higa (right) finally caught up with him against Cristofer Rosales.**

WBC 140-pound titleholder Tsuyoshi Hamada in 1985. Equally as impressive, Higa's 15 wins comprised his entire pro career. However, the weight issue was a constant burden. Rumor has it, Higa was unable to sleep through the nights leading up to his February defense.

As news of his condition circulated, veteran journalist and Japanese boxing insider Hongou Youchi asked Higa's promoter, Hall of Famer Yoko Gushiken, why Higa was remaining at flyweight for his upcoming April fight. Gushiken, who was ultimately responsible for deciding which weight Higa would compete at, replied that "if he can control his diet, he can remain at flyweight."

Following the loss of his gym's only champion, Gushiken admitted: "Losing the weight affected Higa a lot." Rosales backed up that sentiment: "I didn't feel much power in his punches."

Tsuyoshi Yasukouchi, head of the Japan Boxing Commission (JBC), says Higa could face a lengthy suspension for failing to make weight. "Even though it's a Japanese champion, we have to take it seriously," Yasukouchi said. "Being overweight damages the nature of any sport that uses a weight-class system. We have introduced punishments to stop this kind of trend."

In March, the JBC banned former bantamweight titleholder Luis Nery from ever fighting in Japan again after he came in overweight for his rematch with Shinsuke Yamanaka. However, unlike that incident, the Japanese boxing community believes that Higa tried to lose the weight and noted his quick turnaround from the February fight, whereas Nery's behavior was considered unprofessional.

★★★

**In the main event of the** April 15 doubleheader, Japanese boxing superstar Ryota Murata (14-1, 11 KOs) knocked out aging middleweight Emanuele Blandamura with an eighth-round right hook. Top Rank boss Bob Arum, who was in attendance as he co-promotes Murata with Teiken Boxing, used his company's new deal with ESPN to broadcast the bout live to fans in the U.S. early Sunday morning on the network's ESPN2 platform. Predicting a favorable outcome, Arum informed reporters throughout the week that Esquiva Falcao (20-0, 14 KOs), of Brazil, would likely be next for Murata and said it could happen in Las Vegas. Murata narrowly defeated Falcao for the gold medal in the 2012 Olympics.

Arum also echoed words from his previous Japan visit in that he hopes to secure a unification match for Murata with middleweight kingpin Gennady Golovkin and stage the fight in the Tokyo Dome. Golovkin holds the WBA "super" middleweight title, along with the WBC and IBF titles, while Murata holds the secondary WBA "regular" belt. The last time HBO televised a main event from the Tokyo Dome was the Mike Tyson-Buster Douglas heavyweight championship in 1990.

Murata's primary promoter, Akihiko Honda, was the promoter for Tyson-Douglas. RING

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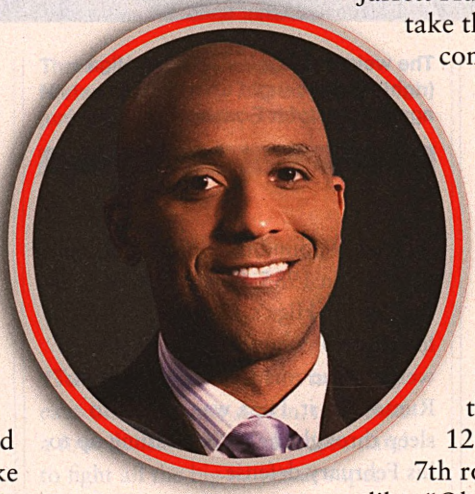
*Nick Skok is a Tokyo-based writer. He can be contacted via Twitter @ NoSparring.*

# FOR BOXING AFICIONADOS ONLY

## Q&A: BRIAN CUSTER

**From 2-point conversions to 3-point buzzer beaters, as an award-winning television and radio sportscaster, Brian Custer covers it all. His favorite call: boxing. "I've always loved the sport," says the Showtime Boxing Analyst – and it's evident (in HD) when he's behind the mic.**



**First, how did you get your start as a boxing analyst?** When I moved to New York, well over a decade ago, one of the first people I met while working at this network SNY was (promoter) Lou DiBella. I told him I was watching his program and wondered who these guys were calling his fights, because I never see them in the newsroom. Lou explains he buys program time and selected the guys, and he says, "Do you like boxing?" I say, "I love boxing." He says, "Well, I like your work, I'd like to hire you." And then he hires me to start calling for his Broadway Boxing show.

**Who is your all-time favorite fighter to watch?** Sugar Ray Robinson.

**Who is your current favorite fighter to watch?** That's a great question because, it's funny, you have favorites once you get to know these guys and there are a number of guys I watch and I say I love them. I spent a lot of my life in Dallas, so I'm a huge Errol Spence fan. I love the hungry "One-Time" Keith Thurman. I've always been a Daniel Jacobs fan because of our similiar cancer-related story* Danny "Swift" Garcia is a favorite. And Jarrett Hurd, I love how they say he can't take this amount of punches but keeps coming and keeps winning.

**Your all-time best rounds?** In my younger days I remember watching Round 3 of Hagler-Hearns. Corrales-Castillo I, Round 10. Leonard-Hearns, 14.

**Current best rounds?** There's so many of these fights that run through my mind. I'm thinking of Hurd-Lara — that 12th round was a good one. The 7th round of Wilder-Ortiz where I was like, "Oh my goodness, is Deontay actually gonna go down?," and then he stayed up. I'll go with the Hurd-Lara final round for now.

***BC is a prostate cancer survivor. And he's fearless about raising awareness of the disease and encouraging men to get screened regularly.** "Getting checked saved my life. Now, it's my mission to save lives." Learn more at www.pcf.org

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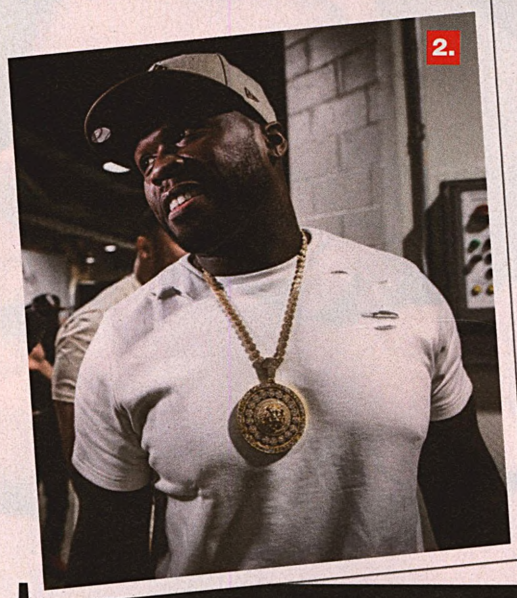
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## STYLES MAKE FIGHTS

Broner vs Vargas, Barclays Center, Brooklyn, NY:
1. (L to R) Brooklyn Nets CEO Brett Yormark joins Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams to name April 22nd Daniel Jacobs Day (pictured with his son, Nathaniel)
2. rapper 50 cent
3. welterweight champion Errol Spence.

3.

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## PRELUDE TO GREATNESS

Lennox Lewis (left) and Evander Holyfield trade blows in their first fight, which was declared a 12-round split-decision draw. The bout took place on March 13, 1999, at Madison Square Garden in New York, and the verdict remains among the most controversial in boxing history. The consensus among fans and media was that Lewis had won the fight with room to spare, and he would go on to solidify his supremacy in the Las Vegas rematch. In that fight, on November 13, 1999, Lewis became the undisputed heavyweight champion via 12-round unanimous decision. RING

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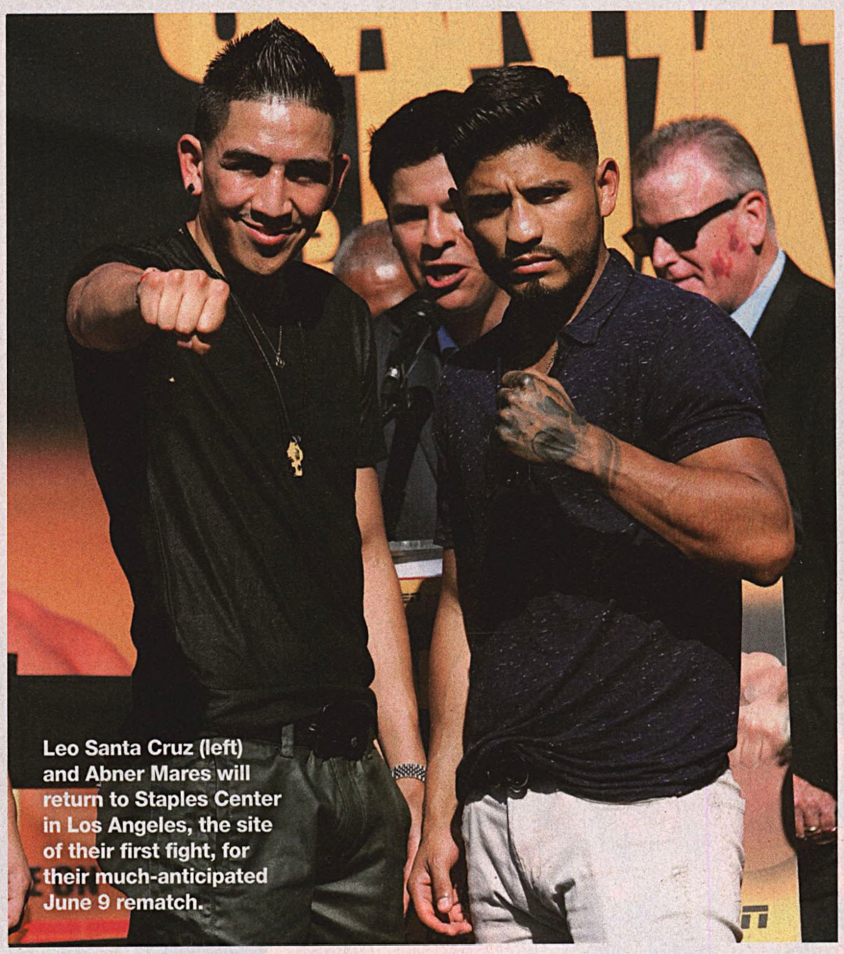
# COMING UP



Leo Santa Cruz (left) and Abner Mares will return to Staples Center in Los Angeles, the site of their first fight, for their much-anticipated June 9 rematch.

## MAY

MAY 25 – Jamie McDonnell vs. Naoya Inoue, bantamweights, Tokyo. Also, Ken Shiro vs. Ganigan Lopez, junior flyweights (for Shiro's WBC title).
MAY 26 – Jerwin Ancajas vs. Jonas Sultan, junior bantamweights (for Ancajas' IBF title), Las Vegas.

## JUNE

JUNE 1 – Javier Molina vs. Jessie Roman, junior welterweights, Los Angeles (Estrella TV).
JUNE 8 – Mike Lee vs. Jose Hernandez, light heavyweights, Rosemont, Illinois (CBS Sports Net).
JUNE 9 – Leo Santa Cruz vs. Abner Mares, featherweights (for Santa Cruz's WBA title), Los Angeles (Showtime); Also, Jermell Charlo vs. Austin Trout, junior middleweights (for Charlo's WBC title).
JUNE 9 – Jeff Horn vs. Terence Crawford, welterweights (for Horn's WBO title), Las Vegas (ESPN).
JUNE 9 – Terry Flanagan vs. Maurice Hooker, junior welterweights (for vacant WBO title), Manchester, England (BT Sport); Also, Tyson Fury vs. TBA, heavyweights.
JUNE 16 – Errol Spence Jr. vs. Carlos Ocampo, welterweights (for Spence's IBF title), Dallas (Showtime).
JUNE 17 – Artem Dalakian vs. Yodmongkol Vor Saengthep, flyweights (for Dalakian's WBA title), Kiev, Ukraine.
JUNE 23 – Billy Joe Saunders vs. Martin Murray, middleweights (for Saunders' WBO title), London (BT Sport).

## JULY

JULY 15 – Manny Pacquiao vs. Lucas Matthysse, welterweights, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Also, Moruti Mthalane vs. Muhammad Wasseem, flyweights (for vacant IBF title).

MAURY PHILLIPS

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